

Algeria activates drought plan

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian authorities on Sunday activated emergency measures to limit water distribution as a continuing drought left urban water supplies at "critical" levels. Rainfall is currently 70 per cent below normal, according to a statement from the equipment and territorial management ministry, which warned of "serious disruption" in water supplies and industrial activity if the situation continued. The ministry announced plans for a reduction in drinking water allowances, and a ban on sinking new wells, watering green areas and car-washing. The measures are already effectively in force in some areas. In Algiers, water is only distributed once every three days, mostly overnight.

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Netanyahu is set to meet Clinton as Arafat pursues non-aligned backing

Israeli premier maintains hard line against calls to desist from settlement but wants accelerated final status talks



Palestinian protesters burn Israeli flag during continuing demonstrations in the West Bank on Sunday (AFP photo)

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Yasser Arafat headed out Sunday to plead their case to world leaders, with both sides insisting there would be no compromise on the crucial issue of building in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Netanyahu departed Sunday morning for the United States, where he was to meet with His Majesty King Hussein as well as President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. President Arafat was on his way to a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in New Delhi, India.

The Americans are trying to restart Israel-Palestinian negotiations, which broke off last month when Israel began construction of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Clinton was expected to ask Mr. Netanyahu to freeze settlement building for the duration of the peace talks, Israeli television reports said. Mr. Clinton and Mr. Netanyahu are to meet Monday in Washington.

President Arafat sent a letter to Mr. Clinton saying that any U.S. initiative must include a pledge by Israel to stop construction on occupied land.

But Israeli Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh said in an interview broadcast Sunday that Israel would not stop the settlement project.

"I can only state unequivocally that the construction in Jerusalem, the building in Har Homa, will continue," Mr. Naveh told Israel Army Radio.

Mr. Naveh said the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) must do more to stop violence and combat terrorism, and that this condition could not be linked to any political concessions by Israel.

The start of the settlement construction was followed by daily protests in the West Bank and by a suicide bombing that killed three Israeli women and the bomber in a Tel Aviv cafe.

Israel accused Mr. Arafat of giving militant groups the green light for such attacks.

Arafat in New Delhi
 Mr. Arafat arrived in

India to attend a conference of the NAM on Monday and will seek support for his battle against the Israeli policy of building settlements in Palestinian areas.

Even though the conference is on the ministerial and not head-of-state level, NAM agreed to receive Mr. Arafat in order to hear the Palestinian point of view on the latest peace process crisis.

President Arafat is to address a special session of the ministerial conference on Palestine and hold talks with Indian leaders. Palestinian Ambassador Khalid Al Sheikh said. He will be in New Delhi for a day.

NAM conference chief Savitri Kunadi said: "Arafat will address a special session on the developments in the Middle East... It is possible the Arab group and NAM Committee on Palestine may issue a declaration on the issue."

It will be President Arafat's first visit to India since 1992 when New Delhi, which for decades staunchly supported the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), established full diplomatic relations with Israel.

"The (non-aligned) meeting is very important for us," Mr. Sheikh told AFP. "It will be part of our diplomatic offensive against Israel over its settlement activity."

"The international community has a responsibility to see that the (peace) agreements signed with Israel are implemented in right earnest," he said.

Mr. Sheikh said the NAM conference had convened a special session to demand that Israel freeze its Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas to save the floundering Middle East peace process.

President Arafat will also hold discussions with Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma, Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and External Affairs Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.

Mr. Sheikh said Mr. Arafat could pay an official visit to India next month.

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Mayo Clinic venue for Jordan-Israel summit on peace process crisis

ROCHESTER, Minnesota (Agencies) — His Majesty King Hussein was to meet Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu here late Sunday on ways to resolve the crisis in the Middle East peace process ahead of a key meeting between Mr. Netanyahu and President Bill Clinton.

The two-hour bedside talks were to take place at Rochester's Mayo Clinic, the world's biggest medical complex, where King Hussein underwent successful prostate surgery Saturday.

Israeli officials said the Monarch had requested the meeting.

They said Mr. Netanyahu felt he could not refuse, particularly after the King's moving visit to Israel last month to express his condolences to the families of seven Israeli schoolgirls slain in a shooting rampage by a Jordanian soldier.

No Jordanian confirmation was available of the Israeli officials' comments.

Mr. Netanyahu, who was to have a crucial meeting with Mr. Clinton at the White House on Monday, was expected to brief the King on his plans for accelerated talks towards final peace between Israel and Palestinians in view of the current impasse, Israeli officials said.

The Israeli premier will also urge the King to use

his influence on Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to persuade him to crack down hard on militants bent on stepping up attacks against Israel, they added.

King Hussein, who met Mr. Clinton in Washington last Tuesday, was expected to reaffirm Jordan's call for a halt to Israel's settlement building on the occupied territories and abide by the commitments Israel undertook in the agreements it has signed with the Palestinians.

The Jordanian position on Mr. Netanyahu's proposal for accelerated talks with the Palestinians was not immediately known. But Jordan has thrown its weight behind the Palestinians and would endorse the proposal only if the Palestinians accepted it, observers said.

Mr. Netanyahu told German television Friday that if his proposal proves difficult, he could meet Mr. Clinton and Mr. Arafat in "a sort of new Camp David summit" along the lines of the 1978 negotiations that led to an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty the following year.

But Mr. Arafat has indicated he will not meet Mr. Netanyahu unless Israel abandons work on a new settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Palestinians have less faith in peace process, opinion survey finds

BEIT SAHUR (AFP) — Palestinian faith in the peace process is plummeting, replaced by growing support for suicide bombings against Israel, a leading Palestinian pollster said Sunday.

Nabil Kukali, head of the Palestinian Centre for Public Opinion, said a survey of residents from self-rule areas of Bethlehem and Hebron and in Arab East Jerusalem found that 48.6 per cent of those queried supported suicide bombings like one which killed three Israeli women in a Tel Aviv cafe last month, another 13.9 per cent had no opinion on such attacks while 37.5 per cent said they were opposed.

The March 21 attack was attributed to militants taking revenge for the construction of a new Jewish settlement called Har Homa in Arab East Jerusalem. Prior to that bombing, a similar survey by Mr. Kukali found 40 per cent popular support for anti-Israeli attacks.

Israel's decision to build the Jewish settlement sparked widespread violent protests by Palestinians and led to a freeze in negotiations between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the right-wing Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Palestinians have been sceptical, saying they feared the plan was an Israeli ploy to get out of earlier commitments, including a three-stage troop pullback in the West

When asked if they still supported the peace process following the settlement decision, only 40.8 per cent answered yes, compared to 77 per cent in a similar poll two months ago, Mr. Kukali said.

"This reflects the Palestinians' frustration with the Israeli position and with Mr. Netanyahu specifically," Mr. Kukali said. "In the poll, 96 per cent of those questioned held Netanyahu responsible for the crisis."

The survey also found that a big majority of Palestinians feel President Arafat should reject Israeli demands for a crackdown on armed militants.

Seventy-six per cent of those questioned notably said Mr. Arafat should refuse to rearrest Ibrahim Makadmeh, a senior military official in the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) who was released from a Gaza jail shortly before the Tel Aviv bombing.

Mr. Makadmeh subsequently praised the bombing and while the PNA issued an arrest warrant for him under pressure from Israel, he remains at large.

The survey was conducted among 470 persons between March 21 and March 31 and it had a margin of error of 3.5 per cent.

Crown Prince congratulates King on successful surgery



AMMAN (Peira) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, sent on Sunday a cable to His Majesty King Hussein congratulating him on the successful operation he underwent Saturday at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester for the removal of a benign enlargement of his prostate.

"Thank God that you are in good health. Your people and the united Jordanian family are delighted, congratulating you on the success of the operation," said the Regent in his cable. He expressed the Jordanian people's and his own wish for the King's speedy recovery and return home.

The King also received cables of congratulations from acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, acting Senate Speaker Ahmad Tarawneh, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai and Public Security Department Director Nasouh Muhieddin.

King Hussein was on Sunday reported to be convalescing at the hospital where he underwent a one hour surgery described by his private physician Dr.



Samir Farraj as "100 per cent successful with no complications whatsoever."

"After the removal of the enlarged portion of the King's prostate gland, the surgeons sent samples to culture and the results did not reveal any malignant tumour," Dr. Farraj said.

Syria calls for united Arab front

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlas has called for an effective Arab front against the Jewish state to foil its "aggressive" objectives.

"Syria has called in the past and is still calling for effective Arab mobilisation to prevent Israel from achieving its aggressive aims," said General Tlas, speaking to young Syrian officers.

Syria is "convinced that the Arabs' strength lies in union and solidarity," he added, quoted by the official news agency SANA.

A Syrian newspaper, meanwhile, denounced the U.S. policy of maintaining Israel's military superiority in the Middle East, saying it was incompatible with the peace process.

"The military cooperation between Washington and Tel Aviv casts dark shadows on the peace process," the Syrian ruling party's Al Baath newspaper said.

"We ask how peace and this supremacy, which allows Israel to impose its hegemony on the entire region and threatens its security at any moment, can be reconciled," the paper said.

According to the newspaper, "the commitment made by Washington is incompatible with its role as the sponsor of the peace process, which should maintain equality" between the parties.

The Pentagon said Thursday that it was stepping up investment in two U.S.-Israeli anti-missile defence programmes and a joint "anti-terrorism" programme aimed at maintaining Israel's military edge over its Arab neighbours.

The United States and Israel also were reportedly to sign a \$200 million deal to provide the Jewish state with 15 Blackhawk transport helicopters along with 34 helicopter engines.

Israel receives annual military aid from the United States of \$1.8 billion for the purchase of U.S. military equipment.

Peace talks between Israel and Syria have been frozen for more than a year.

France urges EU to pressure Israel

NOORDWIJK (AFP) — France wants the European Union (EU) to play a more prominent role in the deadlocked Middle East peace process and pressure Israel to honour the so-called Oslo accords.

French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette told journalists here that France wanted the EU presidency, currently held by the Netherlands, to add its muscle to peace efforts, starting with a direct appeal to Washington to force the parties to reaffirm their base positions.

"We would like the Dutch presidency to send a message to U.S. President Bill Clinton suggesting that the parties establish the basis for a new departure to end the impasse in the peace process," Mr. De Charette said.

He stressed that the new departure should include confidence measures which would drag the parties back toward the Oslo autonomy accords.

In particular, Israel should end the blockade of the West Bank and Gaza

strip and should stop work on the controversial Har Homa settlement on the edge of East Jerusalem, while the Palestinians should reaffirm their commitment to hattle terrorism, De Charette said.

The French proposals are to be discussed late Sunday at a working dinner of foreign ministers, who have been in Noordwijk this weekend to discuss EU reform.

A European-Arab meeting held in Dubai this week said Europe must play a more effective and influential role in the Middle East.

In recommendations to the leaders of Arab and European countries, Arab League and EU representatives said in a statement issued on Saturday that "this stronger EU role has become a joint Arab-European demand and can only be positive, constructive and complementary to those of the two co-sponsors of the peace process, Russia and the United States."

They also expressed their

Hizbollah to exchange prisoners with SLA

BEIRUT (AFP) — The pro-Iranian Lebanese Hizbollah announced Sunday a prisoner exchange with the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) Monday through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

In a statement from Beirut, the group said it will hand SLA militiaman Georges Khoury over to the ICRC in order to obtain the release of three residents of the Israeli-occupied zone in South Lebanon being held by the SLA.

Khoury will be traded for Jaafar Hraish, Mohammad Hazime and Nehme Bazzi at the Bateh crossing point which links the main town of Jezzine in the north of the zone with the rest of Lebanon.

Khoury, 31, was taken by a Hizbollah guerrilla in August from his home in Hdad, a village in Jezzine. A Hizbollah spokesman told AFP that the three men to be released by the SLA have been held for "at least six years."

"Our policy is to free all the prisoners in the hands of the Zionist enemy and its agents, whether they are

Hizbollah members or not. We asked for the release of the prisoners, held the longest," he said.

On Jan. 3, Hizbollah swapped the remains of two unidentified SLA soldiers, via the ICRC, for the remains of two of its fighters killed in 1996.

Israel and Hizbollah traded prisoners and remains in a July 21, 1996 exchange brokered by Bernd Schmidbauer, coordinator of the German secret services.

Mr. Schmidbauer is trying to win the release of Israeli airman Ron Arad, who was taken prisoner in Lebanon in 1986 by militants and who Israel believes is still alive.

During the July exchange, Hizbollah turned over the remains of two Israeli soldiers slain in Lebanon, Rahamin Al Sheikh and Yossef Fink, who had been missing since 1980. The group also freed 17 pro-Israeli militiamen.

In return, Israel released 45 Lebanese prisoners from Khiam Prison in the occupied border zone and handed over the remains of 123 anti-Israeli fighters.

Gulf Arabs seek more security coordination

ABU DHABI (R) — Gulf Arab strategists, contemplating a time when the United States would not police the world indefinitely, are seeking closer military cooperation to combat external and potential internal security threats.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a political and military alliance comprising Saudi Arabia and five other oil states, needs a common defence to ward off external threats, delegates to a weekend Gulf security conference heard.

The call came from Mohammad Jabbar Al Ansari, dean of higher studies at Arab Gulf University in Bahrain, who said Gulf states had not learnt the lesson from the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

A new approach in strategic planning and combat readiness was needed because foreign aggressors could exploit the lack of a unified policy. Gulf newspapers on Sunday reported Mr. Ansari as saying at a two-day conference in Abu Dhabi organised by the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research.

Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zaid Al Nahayan, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

armed forces chief of staff, said most research and analysis on Gulf security tackled the issue from a regional or international perspective only.

"Most of those who worked on this research were also outsiders to the region. So the research overlooks the most important aspect. That is the national perspective on the security of the Gulf region. And this should reflect the views of the people of the Arab Gulf states on their region's security," he said.

Sheikh Mohammad said that since the British withdrawal from the region in 1971 many theoretical and scientific debates as well as many Arab and foreign publications dealt with Gulf security from regional and international perspectives and it was now time for examining it from a national perspective.

Gulf security should be studied and analysed within its political, economic, social, cultural and military dimensions, he said.

"These dimensions interact with one another directly, or indirectly, and lead to a number of great challenges which impose themselves on the region's

states, especially as they approach the 21st century," Sheikh Mohammad said.

He said the conference would look into the possibility of creating a unified Gulf security strategy, which would ensure security and stability, safeguard the resources of the GCC countries and protect their borders.

The GCC comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

A Kuwaiti staff officer, Brigadier Hayat Jumah Al Hamly, said GCC political, economic and military coordination was needed urgently.

A panel concluded Gulf security could be undermined by external threats because of lack of clearly defined policies and poor exchange of information among GCC states.

A discussion on internal security concluded there were two main causes for tension: the market value of the Gulf and its oil, its consumer markets and job opportunities for expatriates, and the region's geographical position on land and sea routes linking East and West.



PALESTINIAN RAGE: A Palestinian couple pass through rubbish on the roadside to avoid a burning tyre as Israeli soldiers watch at the entrance to the Aida refugee camp in the West Bank on Sunday (Reuters photo)

Khartoum to sign peace with two rebel turncoats

KHARTOUM (Agencies)

The Sudanese government and two splinter rebel factions will conclude a peace agreement shortly, Sunday newspapers quoted Parliament Speaker Hassan Abdullah Al Tourabi as saying.

Mr. Tourabi made the announcement Saturday, telling a seminar that the parties that signed a political charter last April had agreed to sign a final peace agreement "very soon," the official Al Sudan Al Hadith reported.

The official Sudanese News Agency (SUNA) said Mr. Tourabi said the agreement would be signed on Thursday, a year to the day after the charter was signed with the two rebel factions led by Riak Machar and Kerbino Kuanyen.

They broke away from the main rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which is still fighting for freedom of the mainly Christian and animist south from the yoke of the Muslim north.

Mr. Tourabi said the peace agreement would be followed by the declaration of a permanent constitution.

The agreement will resolve all questions of rule, economy and justice, and south Sudan will be free to choose its system of government while the constitution will guarantee freedom to all citizens without discrimination," Mr. Tourabi said.

Parliament Deputy Ibrahim Al Sanousi said at the same seminar that the peace agreement "provides for application of Islamic Sharia (law) only in the northern states and allows for Christian and Islamic preaching in the south."

State Foreign Minister

Mustafa Osman Ismail told the panel that his government's foreign policy would remain based on "principles of the cultural (Islamic) orientation even if those principles contradicted international interests."

Meanwhile, the SPLA rebels, now allied with northern opposition leaders in the National Democratic Alliance in a bid to topple the regime of President Omar Al Bashir, are closing in on Juba, the main city in the south.

In another development, Sudan on Sunday warned United Nations relief groups to stay away from areas in the south where government troops are locked in battle with the SPLA.

SUNA quoted Minister of State for Social Planning Major-General Hassan Osman Dahawi as saying relief groups operating in the fighting areas risked being considered supporters of the rebels.

The SPLA seized the southern town of Yei, 160 kilometres southwest of the southern capital Juba, on March 12 and vowed to continue to Juba.

"The relief activity currently being carried out by U.N. specialised agencies including the World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other voluntary organisations at the military operation zones in the south is regarded as a flagrant violation of Sudan's sovereignty and the Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) agreement," said Gen. Dahawi.

OLS, which groups U.N. agencies in southern Sudan, said in Nairobi on Thursday up to 20,000 people in Yei urgently needed food and

medicine because of fighting when rebels seized it.

It said up to 1,200 prisoners of war as well as wounded soldiers also urgently needed food and medicine. The relief operation said roads were open for the first time in many years from northern Uganda to Yei following the rebel offensive.

The rebels said on Saturday they had captured an army garrison west of Juba, bringing to seven the number of outposts taken in two days.

OLS said while the logistics of moving aid by road into the south from Uganda were finalised, the UNICEF sent a plane load of aid to Yambio in the south on Wednesday for Yei. The relief programme said two WFP trucks with 40,000 tonnes of food were expected to arrive on Thursday in Yei and a team would visit the town to assess needs of refugees who trekked back to their home areas from northern Uganda in recent weeks.

Gen. Dahawi said some relief groups had not completed the procedure needed to get permission from the Sudanese government to transport relief materials to areas such as Yei and its surrounding areas.

"The use of planes and other relief transport means in the war zones is also regarded as illegal and poses a flagrant violation of the principles related to OLS and could be viewed as direct support to the outlaw movement," Gen. Dahawi said.

He said the OLS branch office in the south had violated the principles of the relief agreement by issuing permission to a survey team to travel from Moyo in Uganda to Yei on March 28.

German hostages released in Yemen

SANAA (AP) — Four German tourists kidnapped last month in a isolated region of Yemen were released Sunday and on their way to the Yemeni capital, a German official and a negotiator said.

No ransom was paid to the tribesmen who kidnapped the two men and two women, said Sheikh Mohammad Ahmad Al Zaidy, one of the negotiators. A German embassy official, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, said their arrival in Sanaa was imminent.

The tourists were abducted March 27 as they travelled from Sanaa to Marib, about 65 kilometres to the east. It was the second kidnapping of German tourists this year.

The kidnappers, members of the Khalwan tribe, had demanded compensation from the government for damage caused by last July's floods, which destroyed homes, cars and fields.

Kidnappings of foreigners by tribesmen are frequent in Yemen, usually carried out to pressure the government into providing money or new projects. The hostages are later released unharmed.

On March 3, seven German tourists were abducted while riding motorcycles across Yemen and held for more than a week.

Yemen, a country on the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, is one of the Arab World's poorest.

U.S. basketball player converts to Islam at Jabal Abu Ghneim

BEIT SAHOUR (AFP) — Yuri Barnes left the United States seven months ago to play professional basketball in Israel, but he was unlikely to score many points with his teammates after converting Sunday to Islam.

Barnes' choice for the brief conversion ceremony was also certain to shock — a Palestinian protest camp facing Jabal Abu Ghneim, the East Jerusalem site where Israel began construction last month of a new Jewish settlement which has plunged the peace process into crisis.

"There is no God but God, and Mohammad is the Prophet of God," recited Barnes, a 24-year-old black American from Richmond, Virginia, saying the simple phrase required to become a Muslim.

Surrounded by several dozen Palestinian activists who have been camped out on a windswept hilltop since Israel started work on the settlement on March 18, Barnes formally changed his name to Bilal, who tradition says was a black friend of Prophet Mohammad.

But Barnes denied any political motive in his choice of Beit Sahour, saying that before Sunday he was unaware of the storm of violence and political uproar sparked by Israel's decision to build the settlement, known to Jews as Har Homa.

"I only learned of the place's history today," he told AFP.

"I began studying Islam

last summer in the States and when I came here to play basketball, I knew it was an opportunity to meet a lot of Muslims and get more information first hand," he said.

Barnes said he decided to convert before returning home at the end of the basketball season later this month after meeting Assad Al Masri, a Palestinian psychiatrist and fellow graduate of the University of Virginia.

Masri was visiting friends in the tent camp when Barnes called to ask about converting and the two decided to hold the ceremony there.

"There was nothing political about it, I just happened to be on the mountain when he called me," Masri said.

During his seven months in Israel, Barnes became the star player at Maccabee Kiryat Gat, a second division professional team in central Israel.

"I don't think my Israeli teammates will ever understand, because of their background, what they've been taught," he said.

Israel's decision to begin construction of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement led to widespread violent protests in the Palestinian territories and three suicide bombings against Israeli targets by militants. Five Palestinians and three Israelis were killed in the violence.

The settlement and resulting violence has sparked the worst crisis yet in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Military factory explosion rocks central Israel

TEL AVIV (AP) — An explosion and fire at a military facility in central Israel on Sunday sent thick black smoke billowing into the air. The explosion occurred in a storeroom of the Malam company, a subsidiary of Israel Aircraft Industries, in Beer Yacov, about 15 kilometres south of Tel Aviv. One person was treated for smoke inhalation after being rescued from the fire, local police spokeswoman Leah Zohar told the Associated Press. Israel Radio said the factory makes ammunition. Israel Television said Malam makes the Arrow 2 anti-missile missile. National police spokeswoman Linda Menushin said there are no toxic materials in the area and local residents did not need to be evacuated. Thick black smoke billowed from the factory, and flames could be seen as far as 10 kilometres away. Fire engines, ambulances and police cars, sirens wailing, rushed to the scene.

Chechen president to meet Muslim leaders in Mecca

MOSCOW (R) — The secessionist president of Chechnya plans to make a pilgrimage this month to Mecca, where he hopes to hold diplomatic talks with leaders of Muslim states. Russia's RIA news agency reported on Sunday from the breakaway region.

Aslan Maskhadov, who was elected president of the North Caucasus region in January, told RIA he intended to "establish relations" with Muslim leaders also undertaking the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Maskhadov complained bitterly last week about a lack of progress in negotiations with Moscow on a lasting peace deal and economic compensation for the Chechens following the end of their 20-month war against Russian troops last year.

The president, who led his guerrilla forces to a dramatic victory last August, has been insisting on full sovereignty under international law for the mainly Muslim region of one million. The Kremlin refuses to countenance anything other than autonomy within the Russian Federation.

Moscow has warned other governments it will retaliate if any country establishes diplomatic relations with Chechnya.

Although the Chechens' war effort won sympathy and some discreet financial and practical support abroad, especially in the Muslim World, few nations are likely to risk Russia's wrath.

Saudi Arabia's King Fahd has invited to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca this month at his personal expense, Saudi newspapers said last week.

Mr. Maskhadov said he wanted to warn Muslim leaders against swindlers purporting to be soliciting funds on behalf of the Chechen authorities but actually financing illegal armed bands.

The mufti of Chechnya was quoted as saying at the weekend that several plane-loads of pilgrims had been authorised by Russian authorities to fly direct from their capital, Grozny, to Saudi Arabia this week.

Over 100 Chechen pilgrims in buses were reported to have been turned back by police at the border with the neighbouring Russian region of Dagestan on Friday due to passport problems.

Islam is flourishing across the former Soviet Union after seven decades of official communist oppression.

JORDAN TELEVISION

TEL 73111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Captain Planet
14:30Flintstones
15:00French Programmes
16:00Nature's Inventions
16:25Deep Water Haven
16:50Series — Ocean Girl
17:00 Doc. — Extra Dimensions
18:00French Programmes
19:30News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — One Foot in the Grave
20:00 Doc. — Discover Magazine
20:30 Drama — Murder She Wrote
21:10Drama — Highlander
22:00News in English
22:25Under Suspicion
23:00Middle March

PRAYER TIMES

04:53Fair
06:12Sunrise/Duha
12:37Dhuhr
16:12Asr
19:03Maghreb
20:23Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeh, Tel. 510740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

661757 Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
St. Ann International Church Tel. 827136
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654922
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Cold weather conditions will prevail, skies cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance of occasional showers, and winds northwesterly moderate to active. Weather conditions will stabilize in the afternoon. In Agaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalid Klob816715
Dr. Osama Al Hussein847289
Dr. Issam Al Asmar890504
Dr. Nidal As'ad751672
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Nairokh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy649435
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir276852
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Randa Shabin995170
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre813813/32
Khalidi Maternity644281/6

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
J. Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Co.636381
RJ Flight Information08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (53700).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:40Sanaa (RJ)
09:35Jeddah (RJ)
09:55Damascus (RJ)
10:30Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
10:30New Delhi (RJ)
10:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:05Beirut (RJ)
17:20Casablanca (RJ)
17:30London (RJ)
19:30Bangkok (RJ)
23:40Frankfurt, Agaba (add) (RJ)
00:45Casablanca (RJ)
03:45Jeddah (add) (RJ)
03:25Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
04:40 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights

10:30Cairo (MS)
14:30Bahrain (GF)

AKILEH MATERNITY

642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362
Malhas, J. Anuman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272755
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (53700).

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:20Beirut (RJ)
08:05Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
11:50Frankfurt (add) (RJ)
12:25Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:30Casablanca (RJ)
13:15Cairo (RJ)
13:20London (RJ)
13:35Frankfurt (RJ)
21:15Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
22:05Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
23:40Sanaa (RJ)
23:59Damascus (RJ)
01:10Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
02:00Abu Dhabi (RJ)

Other Flights

06:15Istanbul (TK)
06:20London (BA)
08:45Beirut (ME)
11:20Cairo (MS)
15:00Bahrain (GF)
22:50Vienna (OS)
23:55Tel Aviv (LY)
02:30Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:30Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wing (RW) Flights

10:50 Marka Airport (from QALIA) (RW)
21:30Agaba (RW)

HIAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple700/500
Banana600/600
Cabbage (imported)960/600
Cabbage140/80
Carrot220/120
Cauliflower200/100
Cucumber (large)220/120
Cucumber (small)350/180
Eggplant260/120
Fava beans450/250
Garlic1600/1100
Grape fruit200/100
Lemon580/300
Marrow (large)220/160
Marrow (small)340/200
Onion (green)220/100
Onion (dry)500/300
Orange550/300
Peas700/500
Pepper (hot)700/400
Pepper (sweet)650/400
Potato400/240
Radish150/60
Spinach230/100
String beans1000/650
Tomato400/200

Albania probes ambush on premier, vows trial

TIRANA (R) — Albania pledged Sunday to prosecute gunmen who ambushed Prime Minister Bashkim Fino in a swipe at fragile authority in the Balkan state as it awaits the arrival of an Italian-led security force.

Martin Gjoni, a local police chief in the northern town of Shkoder, said he had identified many of the grenade-throwing gang who barred a road north of Tirana to a convoy of cars carrying Fino and other ministers, forcing them to turn back.

"I know many of them and I will send them to trial for this ugly act," Gjoni told Albanian television. But law and order has all but collapsed in the formerly Stalinist country after an insurrection last month.

Politicians in Fino's all-

party government and in Shkoder, which Fino had been planning to visit, condemned Saturday's attack as gangsterism and tried to play down fears of a north-south split in Albania.

Fino is a Socialist from southern Albania, appointed on March 11 to head a government of national reconciliation. Much of the south is controlled by rebel councils demanding the resignation of right-wing President Sali Berisha, a northerner.

The group of about 15 gunmen, who detonated two grenades by the roadside and fired shots in the air, were demanding the release of 120 people from the Shkoder region they said were held in a southern, rebel-held port.

No one was hurt. The perfect, or government repre-

sentative in Shkoder, Elham Sharra, condemned the attack and said "we want these people to be sent to trial."

The cabinet was meeting Sunday to investigate the attack that underscored the chaos in Albania as it awaits the arrival of the U.N.-approved force of about 6,000 troops to protect shipments of food and medicines.

Italy, which says the force will start to arrive in the week of April 14, is expected to provide 2,000 to 2,500 troops. France 1,000, Greece 700, Turkey 500, Romania 400 and Spain 300. Austria and Denmark may also take part.

Italy has become Albania's closest economic partner since the cold war after a history that has

swung between aid and aggression. Prime Minister Romano Prodi faces a political crisis over deployment because a key ally is opposed.

Monday, April 7, is the 58th anniversary of an invasion by Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy, a few months before the start of World War II in 1939. The anniversary was widely commemorated by the Communists who ran Albania until 1990 but has not been widely marked since.

Leaders of Shkoder, which is run by right-wing parties, travelled to Tirana to apologise to Fino.

"This is not the tradition of the people of Shkoder," said Mayor Bahri Borici. "We thanked the premier for pardoning us this mistake and for assuring us he

will come to Shkoder."

Fino, 34, vowed Saturday that his government would press ahead undaunted with a programme including June elections under a deal last month aimed at ending an armed uprising sparked by public anger over the collapse of popular savings schemes.

"The government of national reconciliation will work day and night to restore order," he said. Hundreds of thousands of weapons were looted from military arsenals.

The Albanian news agency ATA said that police had recently arrested four people around the country for crimes ranging from theft to murder. All Albania's 1,309 convicts escaped from the country's seven jails during the uprising.

Taliban agree ceasefire during polio vaccination campaign

KABUL (R) — The Taliban movement announced on Sunday it would maintain a five-day ceasefire while the U.N. tries to vaccinate 3.6 million Afghan children against the polio virus.

"Today complete peace has been announced in our country. Thanks to peace, our children will be saved from polio," said Taliban Health Minister Mullah Mohammed Abbas Akhund. Abbas used the occasion to criticise aid organisations' response to the crisis in Afghanistan.

"The assistance of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been scanty."

"We demand that the international community should not link health issues with politics," said Abbas.

The militantly Islamic Taliban captured Kabul six months ago and have attracted international condemnation for their introduction of harsh religious law and their treatment of

women. They are fighting a civil war against the ousted government and other armed factions.

Dr. Ghulam Haider Rafiqi of Unicef told Reuters in Kabul on Sunday the vaccination campaign was under way.

"The polio vaccination programme started today all over Afghanistan. We estimate that there are 3.6 million children under five years of age that need vaccinations and we hope that we will reach about 90 per cent of them," said Rafiqi.

He said a number of areas — including the opposition-held valleys of Panjsher and Bamyan — could not be covered because of fighting and lack of access.

Polio is an untreatable viral infection that can leave its victims paralysed. "This programme is concentrating on polio because it is possible to eradicate it and it is a priority," Rafiqi said.

Some 16,000 health workers and volunteers have been mobilised for the 5-day \$2 million campaign.

run by the ministry of public health in collaboration with the WHO and UNICEF. Follow-up doses will be administered between May 11 and 15.

In a partly-destroyed clinic in Kabul on Sunday morning, women clad in the all-enveloping veil that the Taliban have made compulsory for women outside the home waited with fractious children for their polio drops.

A kerosene-fired refrigerator stood in the corner of the sparsely-furnished consultation room. Electricity supplies are too unreliable to keep the temperature-sensitive vaccines in electric refrigerators.

After 17 years of war, Afghanistan's health system has all but broken down. Almost all public health supplies are from international aid bodies and there are no records of the incidence of such diseases as polio, which has been almost eradicated in the developed world.

Indonesian 'comfort women' to sue Jakarta over compensations

JAKARTA (AFP) — Hundreds of Indonesian women forced into prostitution by the Japanese army during World War II plan to sue the Indonesian government over its plans to keep their compensation money.

The chairman of the Legal Aid Foundation (LBH) in the central Java town of Yogyakarta, Budi Hartono, said preparations for the lawsuit were almost complete, the media Indonesia Daily reported.

The Japanese government agreed last year to pay the 249 former so-called comfort women nine billion rupiah (\$3.7 million) as compensation for their sexual slavery during the Imperial Army's occupation of Indonesia between 1942 and 1945.

Tokyo said it would hand the money over to Indonesia's Social Affairs Ministry, but in January, Social Affairs Minister Inten Suweno said the gov-

ernment would use the cash to build an old people's home.

"It is not proper in Indonesian culture to reveal women's disgrace," she told a parliamentary hearing at the time.

Other officials expressed concern the money would be "misused" if given directly to the women.

Hartono said his clients Wednesday sent a letter to President Suharto asking for their compensation money, and would also send several letters to Suweno before they take action.

"If we get no response, we will launch the suit," Hartono said, adding he only still required some of the women's fingerprints "as many of them are illiterate."

"This (the compensation) has nothing to do with the minister. Me and my friends should handle it," said an angry Wardiyem, 69, one of the comfort women who plan to sue Suweno.



CHILD KISSES ROOSTER: A young Chinese boy kisses his pet rooster in Beijing on Sunday. The rooster, who has been with the boy since its birth, follows him everywhere he goes. In China, it is unusual to have such a pet, as fowl of almost any species are very popular food items. China is the world's second largest market for U.S. poultry products. Some 30 containers a day of chicken feet, considered a local delicacy, are imported into China (Reuters photo)

Inmates riot in French prison

PERIGUEUX, France (AFP) — Around 100 prisoners rioted in a detention centre near this southwestern French town overnight, ransacking part of the prison in a protest over living conditions and food, police said Sunday.

Four inmates were slightly hurt in the disturbance, and nine presumed ring-leaders were transferred to other jails in Poitiers, Angoulême and Bordeaux, prison officer Christine Boehler said.

The unrest, which was eventually quelled by 100 riot police, broke out around 7:30 p.m. (1730 GMT) Saturday.

The jail in Neuville-sur-Lisieux, about 40 kilometres southwest of Perigueux in the Dordogne, houses 350 inmates and was built in 1990.

"I wouldn't call it a mutiny. It was unrest," said Boehler, adding that the material damage "won't require major work" to repair.

She said the protesters were disgruntled because discipline was tightened after the arrival of a new prison director three months ago.

A similar protest erupted at Neuville in May 1995 over prison food.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cult may be entitled to insurance policy

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — The Heaven's Gate cult may be entitled to a \$39 million insurance policy against alien abduction for the 39 members who committed suicide last month, an insurance lawyer says. John McCarthy, an attorney specialising in insurance law, said California authorities should not have allowed such a policy to be written, but that the company may now be forced to pay, according to prior court rulings. "It is very clear that the members took their own lives in expectation of redemption in a spaceship they believed was trailing the Hale-Bopp comet," said McCarthy. Various news reports said the policy, written by London-based goodfellow Rebecca Ingram Pearson, covered up to 50 members and would pay \$1 million per person for death caused by aliens, as well as alien abductions or impregnations. The beneficiary was the Society of Heaven's Gate.

Pope asks pilgrims to pray for Sarajevo trip

VATICAN CITY (R) — Pope John Paul called on pilgrims to accompany him with their prayers when he makes his long-awaited trip to Sarajevo next weekend. "God willing, I shall be in Sarajevo next weekend for a meeting which I have desired so much with the people of that city," the Pontiff told a rosary ceremony late on Saturday. "I am sure you will accompany me in your prayers." The Polish Pope will spend 25 hours in the Bosnian capital, which he described as "almost a symbol of our century," scarred by dramatic conflicts but open to the prospect of renewed hope, from Saturday to Sunday afternoon. The Pope intends to use his visit to preach religious reconciliation to a land torn apart by four years of inter-communal war underscored by religious divisions.

Gorilla packs up for Israeli 'business trip'

APELDOORN, Netherlands (AFP) — Lukas, the Netherlands' favorite gorilla, was packing his bags Saturday for the kind of business trip that most humans, males only dream of. His mission: To live up to the atmosphere in the gorilla pen at Tel Aviv zoo, where resident male Bosso has shown little interest in his female companions, officials at Apeldoorn Zoo said. Europe's Association of Zoological Gardens has approved sending Lukas to the Israeli city in hopes that he can produce a son or daughter. To keep up his interest, Lukas will be accompanied by Anja, a female gorilla from Rotterdam Zoo who has already made regular visits to Apeldoorn's 200-kilogrammes star primate. Lukas won the hearts of the Dutch when he was born at Saint Luke's Hospital in Apeldoorn, where he and his mother Mandji were treated by some of the best doctors in the Netherlands. Bosso, meanwhile, has no reason to be jealous. He is booked to travel to the Czech Republic where Europe's zookeepers hope he will be more inspired by the female gorillas who live there.

Excessive speed to blame for train deaths

MADRID (AFP) — Spain's worst train crash in 17 years and the one that followed just eight hours later, leaving a total of 20 people dead last week, were caused by excessive speed, the El Pais newspaper reported Sunday. The Barcelona-Irun Intercity Train, which derailed Easter Monday killing 18 people and wounding 90 of the 248 holidaymakers on board, had been travelling at 137 kilometres an hour through a station instead of the regulatory 30 kilometres an hour when it left the tracks, the newspaper said, citing investigators. The Barcelona-Málaga Talgo Train, which derailed the following day instead of 50 kilometres an hour. Neither of the drivers, both of whom had survived, had offered an explanation for the speed, the newspaper said, quoting the National Rail Company.

British butcher offers abattoir tours

LONDON (AFP) — A butcher has begun offering family tours of his slaughterhouse, allowing sightseers to watch cattle, pigs and sheep being killed in reply to publicity over "mad cow" disease and poor abattoir hygiene, it was reported here Sunday.

The "slaughter tours" set up by Gerald David 10 days ago have already attracted a number of visitors to his abattoir in Porlock, a village near Bristol in the southwest of England, the Sunday Telegraph said.

David said he acted after watching reports of the spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), which led to a worldwide ban on British beef exports, and of poor hygiene in British abattoirs after outbreaks of food poisoning caused by the bacteria E.Coli, which killed 22 people.

"I decided it was time that smaller independent slaughterhouses showed the public that not all butchers worked in poor conditions or treated animals badly," he was quoted as saying.

"I know people don't like the idea of killing but when they come on a tour they realise it can be done humanely. I haven't had anyone keel over or react badly to a tour yet."

Regulations prevent David from taking visitors inside the slaughterhouse, where he kills up to 180 animals each week, so they watch from the windows.

Negotiators hold flurry of meetings over 110-day-old Peru hostage crisis

LIMA (AFP) — Peruvian Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani held an emergency meeting here late Saturday with the government's top negotiator in the newest push to resolve the impasse over the 110-day-old hostage crisis.

Arch. Cipriani, a member of the international guarantors' commission, spoke with Domingo Palermo for two hours but did not comment afterwards on efforts to free the 72 hostages held since Dec. 17 by rebels from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA).

Several hours earlier, the other members of the guarantors' commission — Canadian Ambassador Anthony Vincent and international committee of the Red Cross representative Michael Minnig — spent an hour talking with rebel leader Nestor Cerpa Cartolini.

The separate meetings appear to represent a new stage in the commission's bid to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, which began Dec. 17 when 15 armed MRTA members burst into Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima.

Meanwhile, former MRTA members who are serving sentences in Quenkoro Prison, 1,165 kilometres south of the capital, asked Saturday their former comrades to release the hostages immediately, according to a local television news report.

The imprisoned rebels, along with some former members of the radical guerrilla group shining path, announced their position at a ceremony honoring police authorities.

"We who are in prison for terrorist actions reject the taking of the Japanese ambassador's residence and

express our solidarity with the hostages," an ex-MRTA member said.

Stressing that they had taken their stand "freely and voluntarily," the inmates asked the authorities to convey their message to President Alberto Fujimori.

Cartolini's main demand for the hostages' freedom is that 440 MRTA members be released from prison.

Fujimori has indicated he has no intention of agreeing. In another development related to the jailed rebels, Arch. Cipriani Friday visited the prison where a top MRTA leader, Polay Campos, is serving a life sentence.

Arch. Cipriani spent 35 minutes in the Callao Naval Base where campos, who helped found the MRTA 13 years ago, is being held in solitary confinement.

It is not known whether the

two spoke face to face.

Another sign of a turning point in the hostage crisis was Fujimori's meeting with his Bolivian counterpart Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Fujimori later said a "framework" had been established for a peaceful end to the standoff.

Fujimori held a working breakfast with Sanchez after a late-night meeting Friday.

"The framework is set to pave a path that leads to a peaceful solution to the hostage problem," Fujimori said at a joint press conference with Sanchez De Lozada before flying back to Lima.

Rebel leaders and government negotiator Palermo have not met directly since March 12 and Fujimori said the encounter would not come until several sucking points were "ironed out."

Divorced Diana makes debut on the rich Britons list

LONDON (AP) — Divorced Princess Diana is getting richer, while her former mother-in-law, Queen Elizabeth II, is getting poorer, and her ex-husband doesn't even make the list of Britain's richest 1,000 people.

So finds London's Sunday Times, which annually compiles a list of the richest Britons.

The newspaper released a few dozen names from the new list Saturday ahead of publication in this week's newspaper.

To get on the list at all, you need 15 million pounds (nearly \$ 25 million). Diana just scraped in — making her debut at

916th, alongside Delia Smith, whose fortune comes from writing cookery books.

"Everyone is getting much richer, except the queen — or maybe I am getting better at it and not taking in all her treasures," Philip Beresford, a former journalist who now spends most of his time compiling the list, told the AP.

Beresford works from published sources: Media reports, company accounts and reports, valuations that the newspaper commission of art works, classic cars and other assets of the rich, and tracing trust funds.

For Diana, he based his

estimate on the lower end of a divorce settlement she got from Prince Charles last year. That was widely reported to be between 15 and 20 million pounds (about \$ 25 - 33 million), and Beresford then added a few more millions from her late father, Earl Spencer.

Prince Charles doesn't get on the list because most of his serious money is counted under his mother's name, said Beresford.

He scaled the queen down from 400 million pounds (\$ 656 million) last year, to just 250 million pounds (\$ 400 million).

That left out art works which belong to the nation.

Old money still counts. For example, the Duke of Westminster, who inherited part of London's super-expensive Belgrave district as well as country estates, gets listed comfortably with an estimated 1.7 billion pounds (\$ 2.8 billion).

But it's new money that dominates the list, headed by financier Joe Lewis, a reclusive British businessman who runs his international empire from the Bahamas and estimated by Beresford to be worth three billion pounds (nearly \$ 5 billion).

"Only 155 of the richest 500 inherited their fortunes. When the first 200

list was compiled in 1989 the wealth of 57 per cent of the entrants was inherited," said Ian Coxon, a managing editor of the Sunday Times.

Virgin Atlantic Airline entrepreneur Richard Branson, whose estimated 1.7 billion pound fortune was twice last year's figure, ranked 12th.

What many of the richest Britons have in common, said Beresford, is a dislike of being on the list.

"The British reserve comes in," Beresford said, "some 70-80 per cent of them loathe it, of the rest some tolerate it, and only 10 per cent love it."



FILM FESTIVAL: Dancers from the Royal Ballet perform the Apsara dance at the gala award ceremony for Cambodia's first international film festival at the royal palace in Phnom Penh, on Saturday. The 1995 Indonesian film "And The Moon Dances" directed by Garin Nugroho won the festival's top prize the Golden Apsara (Reuters photo)

Personality may be key factor in British poll — study

LONDON (R) — Charisma, or lack of it, will be a big deciding factor in Britain's May 1 general election, Canadian experts said Sunday.

Britons value charisma in their politicians much more than Canadians or Americans do, researchers from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, told a meeting of the British Psychological Society.

This meant things looked bad for Prime Minister John Major, already trailing opposition Labour leader Tony Blair by at least 20 points in opinion polls, said psychologist Mark Pancer, who worked with two political science experts on the study.

"Major was pretty low in terms of charisma," Pancer said in an interview before he presented his findings to the Edinburgh meeting.

Pancer's group surveyed voters at universities in Britain, Canada and the United States for the study — a total of 720 students aged between 22 and 25. They were representative of the general population in terms of stated political preference.

Each was asked to rate three politicians from their own country, three from other countries, and then three international or local celebrities. They were given a list of 40 standard personality traits to use.

Britons were asked to rate former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Major and the late Labour Party leader John Smith. The surveys were done before Smith's death in 1994, when Blair took over.

Americans were asked about President Bill Clinton and former President George Bush while Canadians were questioned about ex-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

International leaders included Clinton, Thatcher and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, while Madonna and Prince Charles were among the celebrities.

Pancer said people tended to rate their own politicians lower than those in other countries. British students held Thatcher in low regard, while Americans and Canadians admired her.

Nevertheless he was surprised how low Major rated. "In the British sample, his ratings were lower than any ratings in any sample," Pancer said. "He got a moderate rating in competence, a moderate rating in integrity, and a somewhat low rating in terms of strength."

Major gets personal as polls confirm Labour lead

LONDON (AFP) — Prime Minister John Major, facing a steep uphill task in British elections three weeks away, on Sunday launched a bitter personal attack on his rival Tony Blair, accusing him of "slithering and squirming" to avoid answering direct questions.

In an interview with the pro-Conservative Mail Sunday, he compared the Labour leader with "snake-oil salesmen" and charged that his policies were "blatant lies and a sham."

With Labour's lead in opinion polls set firm on around 20 percentage points, Major's comments bellowed a sharp personalisation of the election campaign and drew the comment from Labour's campaign managers that Major was starting "to crack under the pressure."

Major said Blair was hiding behind a "cordon sanitaire" in order to "cheat the public of that chance to find out what, if anything, he really believes."

Blair, he said, "on the one hand says 'trust me'. On the other hand he slithers and squirms away from answering any questions. You can't trust someone who won't give you a straight answer."

He compared Blair with a "washing machine manufacturer many years ago who marketed brilliantly, but unfortunately his washing machines didn't work."

Major has until now refrained from joining in personal attacks on Blair by his fellow cabinet members, though observers have noted a degree of acrimony in his attitude, as a former resident of the working-class south London district of Brixton, towards the privately-educated Blair.

On Blair's reform of the Labour Party, he said his rival had done no more than "reform a party that was in the stone age to bring it up to the 1940s."

Alistair Darling, a Labour economic spokesman and leading strategist in the election campaign, said that Major's "crude attack" on Blair "shows that he is clearly beginning to crack under the pressure of the campaign."

He said Labour had "no intention of descending to this level... The public won't trust politicians who have nothing to offer but personal abuse."

Conservative Party managers saw a glimmer of opportunity last week when Blair appeared to contradict himself on the issue of Scottish devolution, and Major highlighted the issue, along with others, in a separate interview with the BBC.

"Two or three days ago they (Labour) were going to let a Scottish parliament raise taxes. Two or three days ago they were against privatisation, now we read this morning they are in favour of it. Two or three days ago they were clear about their trade union position, now they are not remotely clear about it."

Their manifesto is falling apart before our eyes," he said. However the Conservative campaign, already reined in by allegations of sleaze against several MPs and former ministers, suffered another setback Sunday when the Observer newspaper published allegations that a leading Tory lobbyist and former parliamentary candidate had campaigned to secure honours for leading donors to the party.

It said Derek Laud, an official candidate until he withdrew two weeks ago, had brought his clients' donations to the attention of ministers and the party chairman while the honours lists were being prepared.

The rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, led by the enigmatic Laurent-Désiré Kabila, had come under heavy international pressure to agree to the return home of the 80,000 to 100,000 refugees camped south of the north-eastern city of Kisangani.

The United Nations, United States, European Commission, France and Belgium all called at the end of last week for the rebels to let the mainly Rwandan Hutu refugees return.

U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard in New York Thursday accepted the rebels' argument that among the refugees are some of the Hutu militiamen and army soldiers held responsible for Rwanda's genocide in 1994, but insisted "these people are a minority. The majority of those refugees in eastern Zaire are innocent women and children."

Most of them are exhausted by months of forced marches through the region's dense tropical forest, where they fled after the rebels began their uprising in mid-October. They have now massed, hungry and ill, in a sprawl of makeshift camps on the route between Kisangani and the town of Ubundu, some 150 kilometres to the south.

UNHCR readies complex operation to repatriate refugees from Zaire

NAIROBI (AFP) — The U.N. refugee agency was Sunday getting ready to repatriate tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees from Zaire in one of its most complicated such operations.

"We are going to need trucks, trains, at least one ferry to get across the Zaire river, planes, including at least one cargo plane."

Perhaps we will be able to start the repatriations at the end of the week," Paul Stromberg, a UNHCR spokesman in Kisangani, Zaire, told AFP.

Agreement for the return operation was given Saturday by the Zairean rebels who have in the past six months seized more than a third of the sprawling country.

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Aid organisation Medecins Sans Frontieres

(MSF — Doctors Without Borders) warned against rapid repatriation for thousands of the weakest refugees.

Pierre Rijkman, MSF's medical coordinator in Kisangani, said at least 20,000 refugees "cannot be returned immediately."

"Between three weeks and a month are needed for these people to return to a nearly normal condition and be capable of returning," he said, adding he hoped selection of refugees for repatriation would be made according to "medical criteria."

Michele Quintaglie, spokeswoman of the U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP), said in Kisangani Sunday that her agency hoped to start distributing "high protein" food stocks to the refugees from Monday.

Food had been the main problem for the refugees. But now the attempt is to get them back to join other refugees in Rwanda.

Stromberg said the UNHCR and WFP had set up a joint operations unit to organise the logistics of the

operation. The reason for the air operation, according to Stromberg, is that the road route is too bad to take the thousands of trucks needed to return the refugees overland.

Following more than 30 years of neglect by the government of Zaire, the country's road network is in chronic disrepair and frequently impassable to all but the hardest of four-wheel drives.

"That's why we need an air-bridge, as soon as we can get the stuff into place," he said.

It will not be a short-term operation, however "what we are doing today is working on who among the refugees we send back first," he said.

He added that 600 "unaccompanied children" had already been registered and would be "logical candidates" for the first returns.

When the air-bridge is fully up and running, 1,000 to 2,000 refugees could be sent home per day, he said.

Early end likely for U.S. shuttle mission

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (R) — It appeared increasingly likely Sunday that Columbia's 16-day science mission would be cut short because of a troublesome shuttle power generator, a space agency official said.

"The trend in this fuel cell continues to not look good," shuttle director Jeff Bantle said. "If the trend continues, probably in the next four or five hours we will be shutting this fuel cell down."

Switching off the electricity generator, one of three aboard Columbia, would force the space agency to bring the shuttle home Tuesday afternoon. The shuttle can land safely on two working fuel cells and could probably limp home on one if necessary.

The shuttle could land at Florida's Kennedy Space Centre at 2:35 p.m. or 4:10 p.m. EDT (1835 or 2010 GMT), said NASA spokesman Rob Navias. There also would be two landing opportunities at the shuttle's backup runway in California.

The performance of the fuel cell has been degrading since the shuttle was launched Friday. It had briefly shown

signs of trouble before blastoff, but NASA thought it was working properly.

If the fuel cell degrades much more there is a danger it could catch fire or explode, Bantle said.

The devices, which are located in the shuttle's fuselage, provide all of the shuttle's electrical power. They combine supercold liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen to generate electricity and drinking water as a byproduct. Columbia's crew of seven was to spend 16 days in space working in a laboratory mounted in the shuttle's cargo bay. The research would come to an immediate halt if the power generator failed.

The astronauts were conducting 33 major experiments, including investigations into the behaviour of fire in space and the growth of protein crystals for medical research.

It would be only the third occasion NASA has ended a shuttle mission early. A fuel cell was to blame for bringing home early NASA's second shuttle flight in November 1981 and a failed navigation device ended a 1991 mission prematurely.

Two dead, 14 injured in north India bus blast

CHANDIGARH, India (R) — A crude bomb planted by suspected Kashmiri militants exploded on a bus in the northern Indian state of Punjab Sunday, killing two people and injuring 14, police said.

Jamail Singh Chahal, a senior Punjab police official, told Reuters the explosion took place in Pathankot town, about 200 kilometres north of the capital of Punjab state, Chandigarh, near the state's northern border with Jammu and Kashmir state.

The Jammu and Kashmir public transport bus was at a bridge in Pathankot when the device went off at about 10:20 a.m. (0450 GMT), he said. One person was killed on the spot and another died later in hospital.

"It was a crude bomb blast in a Jammu-bound bus near Pathankot," Chahal said.

Two persons have been killed as one more died in the civil hospital in Pathankot, and 14 are in the hospital, out of which the condition of four is serious," he said.

Chahal said police suspected Kashmiri militants. "We suspect it to be the handiwork of some Kashmiri militant as

the modus operandi has been similar to earlier blasts at Ambala Railway Station and outside Jalandhar Railway Station," he added.

Last December, 12 people were killed and 37 injured when a bomb exploded in a sleeper train in the Ambala Cantonment Station near Chandigarh.

Seven people were killed on March 14 when a bomb went off outside a railway station in Jalandhar town.

"We have sent a team of scientists and forensic experts to establish the make and potency of the bomb," Chahal said.

Thousands of people were killed in Punjab during a decade-long Sikh separatist movement that peaked in June 1984 when the army attacked Sikhism's holiest shrine, the Golden Temple, to flush out militants holed up there.

Four months later Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh bodyguards and India's capital was rocked by anti-Sikh rioting.

A Sikh party took power in Punjab after mostly peaceful state elections in February.

Optimism in S. Korea on peace talks with North

SEOUL (R) — South Korean media Sunday expressed optimism that communist North Korea would agree to peace talks to defuse the world's last cold war era flashpoint.

"North Korea virtually agrees to four-way talks," said a headline in the Chosun Ilbo daily.

Earlier, media reports quoted Seoul officials as saying Pyongyang had asked for a meeting with U.S. and South Korean officials to give its

answer to the proposal for four-way peace talks made last April by U.S. President Bill Clinton and his South Korean counterpart Kim Young-Sam.

"There will be a couple of twists and turns, but North Korea will in the end accept four-way talks," the Dong-A Ilbo quoted one unnamed official as saying.

The talks, also including China, are aimed at securing a lasting peace to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-

33 Korean War. Newspapers said Pyongyang's overture was a desperate move to get badly needed food aid.

North Korea's demand for substantial food assistance as a condition for taking part in any talks was rejected last month by both Seoul and Washington, who said aid could only be discussed as part of four-way talks.

"North Korea's proposal for a meeting to give its response is clearly targeting food assistance from South Korea," said an editorial in the Hankook Ilbo daily.

"North Korea must have taken into consideration that unless the food shortage problem was solved soon, Kim Jong-Il's leadership and status was in jeopardy."

Kim Jong-Il is seeking to claim the title of state president and general secretary of the ruling workers' party left vacant by the death of his father, Kim Il-Sung in 1994. There are expectations he will

assume the positions around the third anniversary of the elder Kim's death in July.

South Korean state radio on Saturday reported that Seoul authorities had given a "favourable response" to North Korea's suggestion of a meeting this month to present its formal answer to the peace proposal.

The suggestion was made in a gathering of officials from the two Koreas and the United States in New York on Friday.

mutating and developing resistance. Diphtheria was striking again in Russia and Ukraine, yellow fever was spreading in Africa and tuberculosis was making a resurgence in the United States.

"Antibiotics are losing their effectiveness," he said. Ironically, Western medical advances are also busy creating a world fit for microscopic organisms and not for humans.

The use of modern medicine for cancer and organ transplants has led to an increase in the number of elderly and sick people with poor immune systems, perfect conditions for bugs to thrive.

Heymann said resources in the West were being shifted away from infectious diseases to chronic ones such as cancer and heart attacks, the leading killers in rich nations.

Doctors urge global alert for emerging diseases

GENEVA (R) — The world is facing a medical crisis with frightening diseases of the past such as pneumonic plague reemerging and new bacteria and viruses eluding modern medicine, the U.N. Health Agency warned Sunday.

Microbes are becoming resistant to antibiotic drugs, viruses are mutating and changing hosts and diseases thought to have been defeated are making a comeback in the age of jet travel, slum cities and big population movements, the World Health Organization said.

In a message on the eve of World Health Day Monday, WHO Director General Hiroshi Nakajima of Japan urged governments to put more money into the fight against infectious diseases that kill nearly 50,000 people a day

and pose economic threats to earnings from trade and tourism.

"Infectious diseases are with us. They respect no frontiers. We must work together globally to control them," he said.

Twentieth century doctors had hoped smallpox, plague and malaria were subdued and that such diseases as typhoid, polio, diphtheria, yellow fever and meningitis would soon join them.

But WHO said this smug sense of immunity had been proven wrong by the reappearance of these diseases in many countries and the emergence of 30 new infectious ones with no known treatment, cure or vaccine in the past two decades.

WHO says AIDS, which emerged as a worldwide threat in the early 1980s, could affect

nearly 30 million adults by 2000.

Mad cow disease may yet be another one in the making, as well as its incurable human form, the brain-wasting Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Who blamed the rapid increase in air travel, growth of mega-cities and inadequate safe water and sanitation for mankind's failure to win its ancient war against disease.

In 1996, 2.5 billion people crossed international borders aboard commercial flights. Another 25 million people have become refugees and millions more are migrant workers living abroad.

"People in the West feel falsely secure in their homes. We can't afford that anymore. We live in a world community," David Heymann, a medical doctor at WHO's

Emergency Disease Unit, said. "Man has now become a vector of disease from one continent to another, just like insects."

Environment was also to blame. Global warming helped malaria to spread and floods fed the growth in rodent populations.

Doctors nervously tracking the travels of many microscopic organisms around the world are wondering when diseases such as influenza will strike again before new vaccines can be developed.

"We're worried about a new strain of influenza," Heymann said. "When influenza strikes again, the human population will not have much experience with it. It may kill many people."

Heymann said bacteria and parasites were adapting,

China earthquake leaves 12 injured

BEIJING (R) — At least 12 people were injured and several buildings collapsed when two large earthquakes just five hours apart jolted China's northwestern Ningxia region on Sunday, local officials said.

"It felt very strong," an official of the Jiashi Seismological Bureau said by telephone. "The ground seemed to move from left to right for about one minute."

The first earthquake measuring 6.3 on the open-ended Richter Scale struck the town of Jiashi at 7:46 a.m. Sunday (2346 GMT Saturday), the official said.

That was followed by a stronger tremor of magnitude 6.4 that jolted the region at 12:36 p.m. (0436 GMT), he said.

At least 12 people were injured and about 3,000 buildings, mainly houses, collapsed after the two earthquakes, state radio said, quoting a preliminary survey of the damage.

Some 100 head of livestock were killed in Jiashi, a region that is populated mainly by sheep herders and cotton farmers, the radio said.

However, few deaths were expected because most resi-

dents of Jiashi have been living in tents since an earthquake measuring 6.4 rocked Jiashi in January, killing 50 people, the seismological official said.

"People had been warned not to return to their houses yet so we don't think there will be many casualties, and probably no deaths," the official said.

"We have had warnings of more earthquakes," he said. "But the earthquakes today felt much stronger than the one last January."

The Jiashi district has been hit by hundreds of aftershocks since January as well as several earthquakes that have caused widespread damage.

The most recent tremor last month measured 6.1 on the Richter Scale and left two people dead and injured three, officials have said.

Many of the region's residents live in earthen houses that are easily damaged by earthquakes, and relief teams were searching through the rubble for casualties and survivors, the official said.

However, this was the first time that earthquakes in a series had occurred in Ningxia, state radio said.

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Key to settlement freeze

WHILE THE form and the substance of the formula that the U.S. is said to be preparing to break the deadlock in the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks have yet to be unveiled, it is not difficult to see that the new initiative would be the only promising game in town. There is no doubt that President Bill Clinton, assuming that he has elected to present the peace plan, will have no choice but to press the parties, particularly the recalcitrant Israeli prime minister, to accept it. Officials have been quoted as saying that the president is thinking seriously about convening a Camp David-style summit or a conference similar to that of Dayton, Ohio in 1995 which led to a workable peace arrangement in the former Yugoslavia. Israel's readiness to accelerate the pace of its peace negotiations with the Palestinian side over the final status talks could go rather well with both the Palestinian requirements and the U.S. intentions under such plan, as is understood from those officials.

We have to presume that the Clinton administration will prescribe a freeze of all Jewish settlement activity for six months pending the conclusion of the final status negotiations within the same period. We hope the Americans will not to attach this time frame to the freeze, since Israeli settlements in the occupied territories to begin with are illegal and secondly for fear that the time limit would work against the Arab side, which will mainly bear the consequences of the failure of the negotiations, should it occur, by freeing Israel from any pressure to negotiate in good faith.

There are those who say that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) would automatically accept the projected American proposal since the Palestinians have nothing to lose by going along with it and everything to lose by rejecting it. The PNA will most certainly be asked to play the role of a policeman for Israel as a quid pro quo for the freeze on settlement activity, but such a step the Palestinians will not take if the Israelis are willing to give them nothing in return. Palestinian public opinion is so explosive that there will be total unrest if PNA President Yasser Arafat cracks down on the opposition for no valid or legal reason to do so.

On the other hand, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cannot this time around be expected to reject President Clinton's personal initiative or take action that would nip it in the bud. The real problem for the Israeli leader will most probably be whether his cabinet as currently constituted would approve of Washington's latest move. In case that cabinet rejects the offer, Netanyahu will at least get all possible support from the Americans to form a national unity government that will constitute an even larger base for making peace with not only the Palestinians but also with the rest of the Arab World.

President Clinton should therefore be ready to offer the Israeli prime minister an "alibi" for reversing himself on the settlement programme in East Jerusalem since all Israelis realise that, should shove comes to push, their country could not well afford to alienate or disregard their friends and financiers in Washington.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Dustour criticised a recent government statement that voters in the coming general elections must obtain a voting card for which they have to pay JD1 each, and said that such requirement is bound to prevent a great number of people from taking part in the elections. Fakhri Kavar said that the government realises too well that a large sector of the population in Jordan live under or around the poverty line and that especially large families can have no means to afford to pay the required fee for voting, but it insists on this procedure. Preventing people from voting or placing obstacles in the way of their exercising their basic rights run contrary to the concept of democracy and violate the constitution, charged the writer. Indeed, if obstacles do exist in the way of people exercising their voting rights, these must be removed by the government if it really is concerned over democracy and the involvement of the largest possible sector of the public in the coming democratic process, he demanded. Furthermore, he said, the JD500 fee which is demanded from the candidates is a high fee that not many can afford, and stands in the way of many decent people wishing to serve their country through the legislative assembly, he expressed hope that the government will reconsider its decisions and facilitate the process of democracy.

A WRITER for Al Rai Sunday hailed a decision by Jordanian and Palestinian businessmen to establish a \$100-million-capital company designed to re-construct Arab homes and institutions in Palestinian lands in a drive to counter the Israeli plots to evict the Palestinians from their homeland. Sultan Hattah said that what the Arabs and Muslims need to establish is a special fund for Jerusalem which will help the Palestinians to hold on to their lands and resist Israeli occupation and Jewish settlement programmes. It is not through mere statement and wishful thinking that the Arab Jerusalem can be saved, but rather through such practical steps and through funds and plans to counter the Zionist moves against the Arabs and their legitimate rights, he added. The writer said that it was through the contributions collected by Jews from around the world that the Israelis have been able to build towns and construct Jewish settlements on Arab territories, and the time has come for the Arab and Muslim Nation, said the writer to help their kinsmen materially and morally to hold fast to their homeland in Palestine.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Attracting foreign direct investment

DECIDING WHAT the government should and should not do is a very difficult undertaking for any economist. Some, including Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, believed that the government should do very little. However, when governments act to increase the competitiveness of a nation, their effort is laudable even by the most dismal of the laissez-faire economists.

The signing of an investment agreement last week with the U.S., which should register as an extremely important step towards inviting investment into Jordan from the world's largest investment market, is an example of this type of "good" government intervention. Jordan greatly needs a framework for accepting foreign direct investment (FDI) which the new agreement will help provide.

FDI can become an important source of capital for Jordan. Past attempts at diverting FDI to Jordan from the world's capital markets have met, according to the views of many analysts, with varying degrees of success. Jordan, which is grouped among the severely indebted middle income countries, according to the World Bank ranking, saw its foreign direct investment flows take somewhat sinusoidal swings in the last decade.

In 1986 foreign direct investment in Jordan was at \$22.8 million. In 1987 this number increased by almost 75 per cent to \$39.5 million, and then fell to \$23.7 million in 1988. By 1989, FDI plummeted to a negative amount of [-\$1.3 million]. In 1990, FDI increased back to its 1987 level and dropped again in 1991 to an even larger negative sum of \$12.0 million because of the Gulf crisis. Luckily, 1992 proved to be a boom year as FDI jumped to \$41 million; but it again dropped to (-\$34 million) the following year.

Amazingly, in 1994 FDI rose to \$3 million. During the same period (1986-1994), the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region saw a steady increase in FDI from \$1.24 billion to \$3.68 billion, almost triple the amount of the beginning of the period. Further, all developing countries saw the FDI in their countries increase nine-fold from \$9,899 million to \$80,120 million; FDI in East Asia and the Pacific countries increased 13-fold, from \$3,550 million to \$43,037 million. In 1995 alone, developing countries attracted \$90 billion in FDI with 80 per cent going to just 12 countries and China alone garnering \$39 billion. Egypt saw its FDI fall from \$1,217 million in 1986 to an all time low in 1991 and rise vigorously to \$1,256 million in 1994.

Countries that are large in size tend to attract greater foreign investment. But is that all that determines the level of FDI in a country? In Jordan? Obviously, a frame of reference is needed to stabilise and increase the flow of FDI to Jordan.

This latest agreement with the U.S. is only one strategy; there are other strategies that can aid in the creation of a larger stock of FDI in Jordan. But, a word of advice to the wise: do not rush, investors look at the long run trends. Unstudied, ad hoc moves do not bring investment, rather they simply waste resources.

Furthermore, studies show the following as important determinants of the level of FDI in a country. First, political and social stability; social upheavals and politically motivated demonstrations are a detractor to FDI.

Second, the business climate: a friendly business environment is necessary for attracting foreign investment.

Third, the size of the country's manufacturing exports: the larger the size of the manufactured exports of a nation the greater the likelihood that it will have an increase in FDI, especially if the country already enjoys a high FDI to GDP ratio.

Fourth, the higher the GDP the more FDI is attracted and the more sustained the real growth of exports the more FDI is attracted.

Most importantly, a steadily growing export sector is probably the most important determinant of FDI in Jordan and elsewhere in the world. Therefore, exports need to be developed first if Jordan truly desires to attract FDI.

So what steps need to be taken to ensure that exports grow?

The most important step that can be taken by Jordan is to ascertain that its products meet the standards and requirements of the global market. Foreign specifications for exports and trade regulations need to be made known to Jordanian exporters so that they know about the regulation of trade in EU and the U.S. Free trade areas must be formed to encourage the flow of trade. High customs on inputs increase the cost of manufacturing and need to be completely removed in order to make exports competitive in cost. Growing exports is the biggest attraction to foreign direct investment if the country is developing with a low FDI to GDP ratio.

We know the answer, let's provide the long awaited solution.

A new partner for the Middle East

By Robert Fisk

HOW SOON will the explosion in the Middle East come? The signs are everywhere, even if — through amnesia or wishful thinking — they are largely ignored in the West. Almost 5,000 Egyptian students demanded, at the end of March, a "holy war" for Jerusalem and were driven back at Cairo University by riot police.

For the first time since the emirate was liberated by the United States, in 1991, an American flag, has been burnt in the streets of Kuwait.

Iran has renewed its ties with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) after 18 years of mutual hatred — in a meeting that also went largely unrecorded, President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani met President Yasser Arafat in Islamabad — while outside Jerusalem, the mother of the Palestinian who slaughtered three young Israeli women with his suicide bomb announces that her son "died nobly".

The Israeli secret services — largely regarded as death squads by Palestinians — have been told to operate once again in Palestinian "autonomous areas", while the PLO has warned that Israeli agents will be shot down if they are found. All relations between the Arab states and Israel are to be frozen, on the orders of the Arab League.

Why haven't the Americans — and, indeed, the Europeans — woken up to the imminent storm?

Perhaps we journalists are to blame. After all, until only a few days ago, a BBC World Service reporter was still blithely talking about Israel's construction of a "Jewish housing project" on a "disputed" hill outside Jerusalem, as if all that was at stake was an argument over a public utility.

The "project", of course, is a Jewish settlement and the hill is occupied Arab land upon which any construction is in flagrant violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, the resolution that was supposed to be the very foundation of the 1991 Madrid "peace process".

It is not difficult to see how this kind of reporting can become mendacious as well as incomprehensible.

If no more than a parcel of "disputed" land is at issue, how could it have led a Palestinian to murder three women in Tel Aviv? Even the Palestinian who killed three people at the Empire State Building — a murder equally incomprehensible when it was reported that he had no political motives — now turns out to have written a letter before his suicide in which he raged against the taking of Arab land by Israel.

It is, of course, too late to hope that the U.S. will shake itself free of its thrall to Israel.

Madeleine Albright devoted almost all her recent remarks on the crisis to the need for Israel to prevent "terrorism", devoting only the mildest criticism to Israel for the Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa Jewish settlement.

U.S. negotiator Dennis Ross's latest visit to Arafat and Netanyahu proved to be a total failure.

How pitifully Washington has fallen from the aspirations it held out to Arab and Jew at Madrid in 1991.

And how pathetic is the growing Arab appeal to Europe to intervene in the Middle East to save the peace, Europe?

After the catastrophe of Bosnia, how can any Arab Muslim trust Europe?

How, indeed, could any Israeli Jew trust Europe when that continent's very heart came those who committed the most wicked crime of modern history, the Holocaust?

Yet Europe has been integrally involved in the "peace process".

It was represented at the Madrid summit. It has bankrolled the 1993 Oslo agreement. It rewarded both sides with peace prizes and embassies, rewards that will be kept, of course, by those who are now destroying the peace.

It was Europe, too, which accepted — long before the U.S. and Israel ever did — that the PLO should be involved in peace negotiations. British, as well as other European ambassadors, met Yasser Arafat's senior officials throughout the seventies. There is still a rumour in the Middle East that many of Arafat's speeches between 1988 and 1992 were drafted by the then British ambassador to Tunis.

And it was the member states of the European Union in 1980 that drafted the Venice declaration, which specifically stated that the PLO should be "associated" with peace negotiations. The terms of the Venice declaration were repeated by European foreign ministers in Paris four years later when they added their support to the "right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, with all that this implies" (the last five words underlined in the official statement).

The Europeans maintained their commitment to Middle East peace. In Brussels in 1987, Community foreign ministers were demanding an improvement in Palestinian living conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, and giving preferential access to the Community for goods from the occupied territories. A year later, the EU was welcoming the Palestine National Council's acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 — calling for total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab land in return for the security of all states in the area — the same resolution that James Baker was later to cite, in confidential letters to Arab leaders, as the basis of the post-Gulf war "peace process".

There then followed the folly of the 1993 Oslo agreement, a deeply flawed private peace deal between Israel and the PLO that allowed both sides to delay the most important issues that separated them — giving Israel time, for example, to encircle Jerusalem with settlements such as Har Homa — which contained no international guarantees, which left half the Palestinian population with no "right of return," and, most damaging of all, effectively allowed Israel to renegotiate U.N. Resolution 242 rather than be compelled to abide by it. A supine United States — whose Middle East policy is indistinguishable from Israel's — has signally failed to stand by its obligations as an "honest broker" in the "peace process". This is why so many in the Middle East are now looking towards Europe.

Enfeebled as it may be because of its lack of a common foreign policy, Europe none the less has a political stake in the Middle East. Last year, President Jacques Chirac showed how France could renew its ties with its former mandate territories of Syria and Lebanon and, by travelling to Damascus, French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette secured a place for France on the south Lebanese ceasefire committee last April, to the fury of the Americans and the Israelis. The French, as well as the Israelis, Americans, Syrians and Lebanese, now sit on that committee.

By visiting Jerusalem last October — and by publicly expressing his anger at the Israeli security men surrounding him before his visit to the West Bank — Chirac also encouraged the Palestinians to believe that Europe understood their predicament and the imbalance in the "peace process". Chirac felt personally humiliated, privately expressing his exasperation at the Israelis who insisted that he always left and entered his Jerusalem hotel via the tradesmen's entrance. But it was de Charette who bluntly asked this week "whether we can any longer talk about a peace process." It is the French parliament which is now reconsidering whether Israel should still be given special trading status with the EU.

Perhaps what is needed is a closer realisation of what the Middle East — and the north African nations, as well — mean to Europe. America has identified national interests in the Middle East; cynics might sum them up as Israel and oil, though not necessarily in that order. Europeans, too, have interests, although they have something infinitely more important: the nations of the Middle East are our neighbours. They will never be neighbours of America.

Since the 11th century, the conflict between Christianity and Islam has been our conflict. So why should Muslims trust us, given the murderous nature of that relationship? Yet in many parts of the Middle East, Europe is now seen as a balancing force — a proxy, if you like, to the old Soviet Union — whose friendship must last longer than America's, whose interests are more intimate to the Middle East, and whose relationship with the region — however, tragic or evil it has been — at least now avoids the excesses of American policy.

The 1995 Barcelona conference offered European "partnership" with the nations of the Middle East rather than the traditional subservience that the U.S. demands of its Arab allies. Barcelona demanded a peace settlement based on U.N. Security Council resolutions "and principles mentioned in the letter of invitation to the Madrid... Conference, including the principle of land for peace..." The Barcelona "Euro-Mediterranean partnership" — also produced political objectives: democracy, human rights, liberal economies. Not, you may say, the sort of aspirations likely to commend themselves to Arab dictators but none the less worthy, and essential to the nature of the proposed relationship.

So in the critical days ahead, Europe will have an opportunity to offer — at the least — a neutral third party as the American "peace process" inevitably fragments. Perhaps the catastrophe looming in the Middle East will force European ministers to unify their objectives in the region, even to follow France's independent lead.

In both Europe and America, the British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind has been doggedly criticising Israel's settlement policies, but it is going to need stronger stuff than this if Europe is to secure a role in the area. EU financial penalties against those who break their agreements might be a fair balance to the rewards that Europe has dutifully handed out over the past six years.

Perhaps it should also make an offer of peacekeepers from NATO nations who could ensure that the terms of the original 1991 "peace process" are kept, and who could judge how rigorously both sides are prepared to stick to the terms of this agreement. For only by a return to the land-for-peace deal based on U.N. Resolution 242 — which the Arabs were originally promised — is a future bloodbath likely to be avoided.

Perhaps, too, European journalists (including the BBC) — as opposed to American reporters — must face more truthfully the moral issues of the Middle East crisis, however, much they may be criticised for doing so. In any event, American credibility is now at its nadir in the Arab World. There is no reason why Europe should join it in disaster.

The Independent

Human Rights File

'Jerusalem belongs to the Arabs too'

By Waleed M. Sadi

IT IS simply amazing how Israel wants the Arab side and the international community at large to be sensitive to its attachment to Jerusalem but refuses to entertain any sensitivity towards the Arab attachment to and association with it.

The criterion for Israel should not be how many times Jerusalem was mentioned in the Koran and whether the Holy City was a capital city for the Arabs or Muslims. The fact that the Arab side perceives Jerusalem as a holy city and have waged wars over and over again for its control should be ample evidence of the extent that Jerusalem is and has always been to the Arabs. Has Israel forgotten the wars that Muslims fought with the crusaders and other invading armies before them and after them over Jerusalem? How can Israel now maintain that the city is important only to Judaism and Israel when the Arab and Muslim side fought so many battles over it to assert their claim on it? What makes Israel believe that its temporary control over Jerusalem would be permanent in historical terms.

Hasn't Jerusalem exchanged hands so often in the past because of its value and symbolism for more than one people or faith? Can Israelis be so naive as to believe that their current military superiority would be so durable for all times that it may remain oblivious to the sensitivities of other religions and peoples? Would it not be infinitely more prudent to arrive at some reasonable accommodation with other faiths and peoples that could be lasting and functional for all times no matter which party is stronger? Why not seize upon the current conditions to strike a deal that could be internationally secured and guaranteed?

For the Arab side, it is not only David's city, as Israel maintains, but also the place where Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven. It is also Saladin's city, which he reconquered from the Crusaders in 1187. It is also Omar Ben Al Khanab's, the second caliph who entered the city in 638 AD and whose

mark will live on for ever. The 10th caliph, Abdul Al Malik Ben Marwan, built the Dome of the Rock in 688-91 as a living testimony to the stature of Jerusalem in the eyes of the Muslim World, especially since the advent of Islam. And what about the Ottoman era when Jerusalem remained a Muslim metropolis for four centuries, beginning with 1517 and until the start of World War I? Can Israel ever deceive itself into believing that centuries of Arab and Muslim rule of the city can be brushed aside as insignificant historical footnotes?

Were not the Egyptians the most ancient rulers of "Urusalem," its Semitic name? David captured the city in the year 1000 BC only to be sacked by the Egyptian Pharaoh Sheshonk I in 922 BC. The Philistines and Arabs took turns in occupying the city later on. In 586 BC, the city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. It was the Persian King Cyrus who allowed the return of Jews to Jerusalem in 538 BC. Thereafter, it was the Greek's turn to rule the city, starting with 198 BC and until the Roman's era started, when Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC.

There are countless historical and religious monuments all over the city which lend an added support to the Arab contention that Jerusalem is important and relevant to them and other alike. Unlike the Israeli side which rejects all Arab claims on the city, the Arab World concedes that the city also has a Jewish character. Even modern Jerusalem, which we now call West Jerusalem, is full of monuments and constructions that attest to the contemporary link of Arabs to the City.

All that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu needs now to do is tour once again the Israeli side of Jerusalem and see for himself the extent and depth of the Palestinian association with the city.

Would it be too much for Israel, then, to concede that Jerusalem is revered by the Arabs? The sooner Israel accepts the total reality about Jerusalem the sooner will it be possible to strike an equitable balance among all who have legitimate claims on it.

LETTERS

Peace under fire

To the Editor:

THE AWFULLY fragile peace process is again in serious jeopardy with slim chances of survival, particularly as it has been coming under fire, and turbulence rocks the West Bank. It will be again up to the most experienced and immune of crisis politicians, diplomats and peace mission mediators to rush to this troubled region and come up with a salvage formula. The scenario is pathetically familiar even to the politically blind. Israel will continue to pursue its defiant policies and persistently violate international law by pushing forward with its most favourite undertaking, namely the expropriation of Arab land, demolition of Arab homes and the creation of more and more settlements. As long as a "veto" can be secured at times of need, who cares what the rest of the world may think, for it goes without saying that no one is to question the indisputable right of the Jewish people to realise their dream of a "Greater Israel," regardless of what it takes. A little too convenient, isn't it? But is it really the Jewish people who want things done this way? Or is their stance on peace issues also totally ignored by a government that claims to be democratic? No wonder why Jewish media always extensively covers Palestinian riots and acts of violence, but has in comparison little to show and tell about the peaceful demonstrations organised by Jewish peace supporters and opponents to government practices. It is indeed hard to believe, that an army of Jewish progressive intellectuals and scholars supports explosive policies that provoke insecurity and instability in their midst. Perhaps it is time for the Jewish people start questioning what is right and wrong!

When asked by reporters, whether he will go on with plans for new Jewish settlements and the expansion of old ones, an unyielding Netanyahu replied, that it would be inhumane to "uproot life." But it is in fact uprooting of life by means of "ethnic cleansing." Yet, it is carried out with ease and determination under the umbrella of peace treaties, and at times when the status of Jerusalem and the fate the Palestinians still living there are still determined and resolved. Please allow me to ask, how humane it is to "up-root life" of Palestinian families whose cultural and historic heritage have been interlocked for hundreds of years with the image of Jerusalem? Must historians therefore rewrite history for convenience? For the average Palestinian, the hope for a true and lasting peace has been totally shattered. His/her anger and disillusionment with the recent Israeli expansion policies and the inability of the international Security Council to freeze such moves has urged him/her back to the streets rioting and throwing stones. What on earth can stop them? Arafat's forces, Netanyahu's threat to resort to military measures or intensified closed-room diplomacy? It seems to me, that bringing the peace process back on the political track is somehow inevitable, yet it is the confidence of people that should be restored and maintained by permanent actions of goodwill and genuine desire for true and lasting peace!

Mrs. R. M. Nuseibeh,
Amman

'The most French of Moroccans, lives on two shores of mingled memories'

By Sylvie Bullo

HUNDREDS OF writers from Argentina, Africa, Switzerland, America and other countries have made a name for themselves in France, but not one of them has forgotten the decisive moment when he discovered this country. They include the Moroccan writer Taher Ben Jelloun who left Morocco, full of light, to come and study in a silent country, and, when he was about to return home, he hesitated and settled in Paris.

Between Fez, "that town where one suffocates with those stones darkened by lies and a taste for gain, and Tangiers, "incomprehensible to its inhabitants and dear to artists, a city which is nothing but degradation," Taher Ben Jelloun returns to Morocco in his latest book, "La Nuit de l'Erreur," to bring the legend and myth of the seductive, cruel and destructive woman into play in it.

The writer has made his native land into a kind of base on which he modulates his work, seeking out memories and places he has lived in, like a yearning. Taher Ben Jelloun himself admits that "literature repairs the betrayal of memories."

Ben Jelloun has been

captivated and captured by French culture. He is acknowledged as an important writer, is fêted in Paris and remains the most French of Moroccans. He lives on two shores of mingled memories. Morocco is his roots, his land, his "native poem" as he calls it, and his everyday anguish. On the other shore, there is Paris, a language, a place to write in and somewhere to live. "I observe, I scrutinise. I am curious about this everyday life made up of noise, of brief polemics, short-lived scandals and such similar words. I read the poets. I open French novels. I leaf through them and I read some of them. I do not feel very close to this literature but I am interested in it. I feel like getting to know it and discovering it. I often take part in discussions. I do not stay aloof."

He first came to Paris July 1961, at the age of 17, and he found the town completely grey, from the sky to the buildings, not understanding why the country seemed to be deprived of light. Then he was struck by the rigidity of the expression worn by people he came across in the streets, on his walks.

"On the train taking me from Saint-Lazare to Marly-le-Roi, the town in

which I was following a course in cinema appreciation. I can still remember the reigning silence and the closed faces of the passengers. Later, I noticed that, under the influence of fine weather, they were transformed. In the evening, they sang and danced in the streets. I can't help thinking that Paris is a city which is cursed by its climate! Yet it is one of the rare places in the world in which there is such artistic feverishness and where the architecture is so exceptional."

Ten years later, Taher Ben Jelloun returned to France, this time to do a doctorate in psychology. This time, he had a completely different impression. "I was extremely happy to be here. To my great surprise, I discovered a whole variety of nationalities in the microcosm of students. I thought it was limited to the student residence, but, on coming out, I noticed that it was almost a widespread phenomenon and that in France the mix of cultures well and truly exists. I did not have the intention of remaining in Paris once I had finished my studies, but, curiously, each time I was to return to Morocco, I felt anguish and once there, I missed Paris. So, little by little and

without having really decided upon it, I settled in France."

Twenty-five years later, Taher Ben Jelloun is still here, having, in the meantime, become one of the most popular Maghrebian French-language writers. He has won over the intellectuals and other people with his stories, his poetry and his tales. He has a gift for story-telling. A handful of sand, a little wind, snatches of dream and swallowed-back tears can all be a pretext for him to tell a beautiful story. Taher Ben Jelloun is a descendant of the troubadours of the sands and the bards of the desert. He takes his readers on a journey in time, space and imagination. The boundary is sometimes unclear between the dream-world and life.

The author of "La Nuit Sacrée" (which was awarded the Goncourt prize in 1987), enjoys leading the reader astray and playing on all aspects of reality. With his erotic boldness, his feminism and his mysticism, "La Nuit de l'Erreur" is inhabited by poetry. Ben Jelloun's first love. He has remained faithful to it.

L'actualité en France

Kuwait U. sacks professor who dared speak of gays

By Kathy Evans

KUWAIT CITY — A woman has been dismissed from her professorial chair at Kuwait University for suggesting that homosexuality exists in the emirate.

Dr. Alia Shoaib, aged 31, claimed that lesbianism was rampant among students and that she had witnessed two women making love in the university toilets. One of them was heavily veiled, a manner of dress normally associated with militant Islam.

The professor made the remarks in an informal conversation with a student who subsequently published them in a local magazine. The magazine, Al Hadaf, is now being sued for obscenity.

In the Middle East, homosexuality truly is the love that dare not speak its name. The issue of gay rights has never been raised and most gays are still very much in the closet. Many live in fear of being discovered, for in a number of states, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, homosexuality acts between consenting adults are a capital offence.

Since her comments, Dr. Shoaib has faced an investigation by the university authorities and hints, she claims, of her citizenship being withdrawn. Her books of short stories and poems which cover a variety of sexual themes, are also facing prosecution.

Dr. Faiza Khorafi, the female president of Kuwait University, who was responsible for her dismissal, claims that homosexuality does not exist in Kuwait. "Ours is a Muslim society and homosexuality is against Islam," she says.

Dr. Shoaib maintains that the segregation of men and women in Muslim societies has generated a repressive sexual climate. "Sexuality is locked up and is therefore being expressed in unorthodox forms," she said in an interview. "The gay lifestyle in the West is much more healthy. Western gays are honest about their sexuality."

Dr. Shoaib read philosophy at Birmingham University. In Gulf terms she could be classified as the region's first radical feminist, arguing for such feminist ideals as a woman having control of her own body and the right to pursue her sexual identity and choose her husband.

Her controversial views have divided the establishment. The under-secretary of the education ministry, Dr. Rasha

Sabah, describes as "a dinosaur mentality" the belief that homosexuality does not exist in Kuwait. Dr. Shoaib's dismissal has yet to be confirmed by the education minister.

One leading liberal member of parliament, Abdullah Nihari, comments: "Homosexuality is not only prevalent in our society, it is part of our culture. Men used to go to sea for long periods, and homosexuality among men is not abhorrent, particularly for those who play the role of men."

In contrast, the information minister, Sheikh Saoud Al Nasser Al Sabah, says the professor's comments have "defamed the university and its students."

"We know there are gays in Kuwait, but we are not San Francisco. They are hidden and should remain so," the sheikh says.

University professors say the case has implications for the freedom of speech of both teachers and students at the university. One female professor was forced to submit to an investigation recently after being accused by an Islamic militant student of teaching the theories of Darwin.

"Ours is becoming a puritanical society, and Dr. Alia's case has made it all frightened," says one female professor who does not want to be identified.

Even so, homosexuality is a theme which is just beginning to emerge in books and the media. Another leading Kuwaiti novelist, Leila Othman, is currently facing obscenity charges for her book "The Departure".

It contains a short story about two Kuwaiti girls having a lesbian relationship, and another dealing with homosexuality among the emirate's immigrant labourers. Labourers are not allowed to bring their families with them, and are often housed in cramped conditions.

Dr. Shoaib's novels and poems are facing similar problems in being published. One book currently banned covers the issue of marital rape.

A Saudi satellite channel, ART, broadcast recently the first interviews with gays, in which an Arab homosexual was allowed to speak of his sincere love for another man. But the programme was spliced with songs and pictures of brides in wedding dresses.

The Guardian

Humour and desperation drive Belgrade protests

By Caroline Smith
Reuter

BELGRADE — Relying on humour and pride to keep up their morale, students and teachers hold daily protests to a cacophony of whistles and pop music — but the festive sounds belie a crisis that is killing Serbian education.

Schools are shut across Serbia and classes at Belgrade University cancelled as political and financial demands drive their occupants onto the streets.

The students of Belgrade-University are demanding the resignation of their die-hard socialist-appointed rector Dragutin Velickovic.

They say he failed to support them when they joined the three-party Zajedno (together) coalition in November to protest against annulled local election results.

Though the main protests over the elections — sparked by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's refusal to acknowledge opposition gains — have ended and the opposition is installed in Belgrade city hall, the students continue to press their demands over the rector.

However Mr. Velickovic has told a news conference that he would not resign and instead asked for the dismissal of all faculty deans who have supported the daily protests, provoking cries of "shame on you" from students.

The attention-grabbing student protests have taken the

form of "searching" for Mr. Velickovic who has been keeping a low profile in recent weeks. Students sought him in Belgrade city zoo, fished in the Sava River with a Red Socialist Party card as "bait" and visited the observatory to look for him in outer space.

The events may be no more than publicity stunts but they precede major demonstrations by thousands of other students every afternoon. The students now risk forfeiting the whole academic year — and throwing the university into chaos in September when thousands of school-leavers want to enter.

"Any normal person would resign after this kind of pressure. We are not happy at all, it will be very difficult to make up all the lectures we have lost," said Ivan Marovic, 23.

Dressed in their best jeans and wearing sunglasses in the weak spring sun, the students gather in Belgrade city centre beside a lorry with speakers blaring out Blondie and Iggy Pop.

It would be easy to get the impression they would rather hang out with their friends than sit in a stuffy lecture theatre, but the students are serious about their protest.

"With this kind of pressure we are provoking him (Velickovic). We want him to see that he hasn't one ounce of credibility left among the students," said Marovic.

For teachers, the protest is about more than ideals — it is a sign of the desperate financial straits thousands of people

in Serbia are in as a result of five years of war, sanctions and economic mismanagement.

Teachers, from pre-schools through to secondary schools across Serbia, are heading into the second month of strikes and say they will hold out until the government meets their demands for wage rises and back pay.

Crowded around army and government buildings in central Belgrade, making a cacophony with whistles which have come to symbolise the winter's protests, they cannot support their families and say they are striking for their dignity.

They do not feel guilty about the children deprived of schooling — not out of malice but out of sheer desperation. Most have not been paid since early December.

Olga Jovanovic, a primary school teacher in one of the outlying districts of Belgrade, said her school had been closed for a month. "The parents have supported us. It is impossible to teach, the feeling of poverty is so strong that we are not able to go into the classrooms with this attitude."

Beating his hands against the cold as he stood in a crowd of hundreds of teachers, Petar Ponjavic said the strike was about more than money.

"It's about the moral degradation of our profession. I can hardly meet the needs of my family and I only have one child... We are aware the government doesn't have the funds to meet this, but we are asking for our dignity."

"I do not feel guilty because the majority of people,

including children, have the same difficulties as us. By fighting in this way we are also fighting for them."

The problem of how to care for the thousands of children who are not at school does not arise in a country where half the workforce is without a job.

Other workers in dispute over wages and health and social workers, motor industry workers, the metal workers' union and textile workers are all in dispute over wages, which are up in two years overdue.

Warning strikes have been held in several sectors and one commentator said they were a signal of the start of a "spring of discontent" in Serbia.

"We are going to have social and economic marches, the teachers' protest is a clear sign of it. The nature of protest is going to change from political to economic, and I see it coming soon," said Zarko Korac, a member of the opposition in the Serbian parliament.

Another commentator said the unrest was a result of sanctions filtering right through the economy after industry had lain idle for years.

It is not a good prospect for students emerging from university and they know that even if they do return to class on time to salvage this year's studies, the chances of finding employment when they graduate are bleaker than ever.

Netanyahu is set to meet Clinton as Arafat pursues non-aligned backing

(Continued from page 1)

Bank to be completed by mid-1998.

A poll published Sunday indicated that 49 per cent of Palestinians support the March 21 suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv cafe. Thirty-eight per cent opposed it, and the rest had no opinion (see separate story).

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy expressed confidence Mr. Clinton would not demand Israel stop the settlement project at Har Homa.

"The U.S. approach on this issue is well-known — it does not entail confrontation or pressure, but friendly and responsible clarification, and that is the way it is going to be," Mr. Levy told reporters.

Israeli officials contended that the Clinton administration shared Israel's view that the root of the crisis was not settlements but rather the Palestinians' use of violence and "terrorism" as a political bargaining chip.

Mr. Netanyahu hopes to get Mr. Clinton behind his offer to seal a final peace within six months ending, if necessary, with an intensive U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian summit like the 1978 Camp David

meeting which paved the way to Israeli-Egyptian peace.

The European Union's Middle East envoy, Miguel Angel Moratinos, has held several meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders in the past few days.

"Mr. Moratinos has been discussing a series of confidence building measures that might be taken by both sides," said a spokesman for the envoy, declining to give details.

"He had encouraging meetings with Mr. Arafat last night and Foreign Minister Levy today," the spokesman said.

Palestinians view Mr. Netanyahu's offer of go-for-broke talks as a ploy to circumvent interim accords which already require him to hand over occupied land. They view Har Homa as a unilateral act violating a deal to negotiate the Jewish settlement issue.

It was unclear whether Mr. Netanyahu would offer Mr. Clinton a gesture to revive U.S.-backed peacemaking launched in 1993.

U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said: "We are developing our own ideas

and we're going to put them forward."

Settlers discouraged

Five Israeli families set up a makeshift settlement inside a West Bank military camp over the weekend and demanded permission to set up a permanent Jewish community. Israeli officials said Sunday.

The action took place shortly before Mr. Netanyahu left for Washington.

The Israeli families moved into the Rehelim camp as part of an escalated campaign to expand Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

Rehelim is a site controlled by the army but where civilians have been occasionally permitted to stay and where a Jewish religious school was set up several years ago.

"There has always been a civilian presence at Rehelim and we hope the government will approve our demand to make it a permanent settlement," one of the group told Israel Radio on Sunday.

A defence ministry spokesman refused to comment on the Rehelim.

France urges EU to pressure Israel

(Continued from page 1)

deep concern regarding the difficulties the peace process has run into because of Israeli obstinacy in setting up settlements in occupied Arab territory, including East Jerusalem."

Participants in the Dubai conference on European-Arab cooperation on the peace process included a hundred Arab and European academics and experts as well as Abdul Meguid and Mr. Moratinos.

The conference was organised under the auspices of the crown prince of Dubai and United Arab Emirates defence minister, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashed Al Maktoum.

Europe is the main trading partner of the Arab countries and the second largest foreign investor in the region. The European Union is also the main donor to the Palestinians, and has given them nearly \$1.4 billion since 1987.

"The conference

expressed deep concern over difficulties facing the peace process as a result of Israel's obstinate positions and its insistence on building settlements on occupied Arab land, including East Jerusalem," the final communique of the conference said.

"There is a need to overcome these difficulties in order to achieve a fair and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the Madrid accord and related resolutions by international legitimacy, especially U.N. resolutions...the principle of land-for-peace, the Oslo accord and the Hebron redeployment protocol," the communique added.

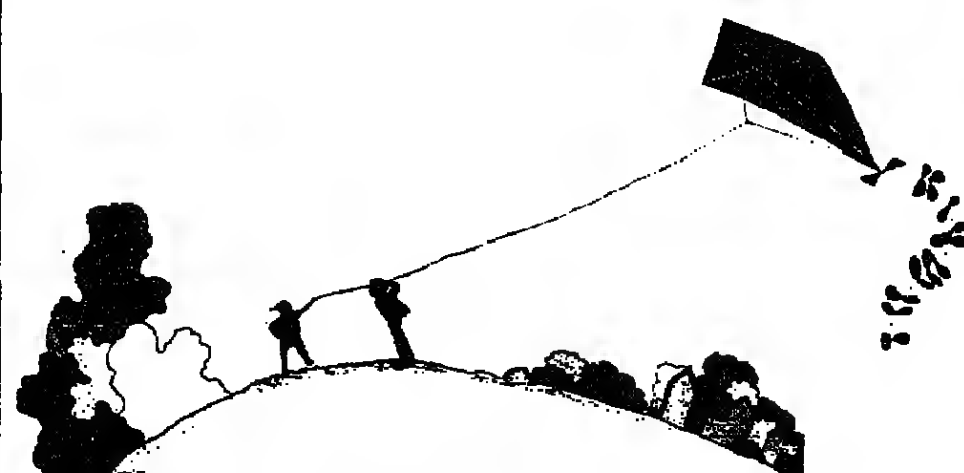
The communique said "a more effective and influential European role in the peace process has become a joint Arab and European demand...which could only be positive, constructive and complementary to the role of the two sponsors (U.S. and Russia)."

Earthquake jolts Iranian city

TEHRAN (AP) — A moderate earthquake shook the city of Bojnurd in Iran's northeastern Khorasan province, destroying some houses, the Islamic Republic News Agency (ORNA) reported Sunday. The agency said there were no immediate reports of casualties from the 4.8-magnitude quake, which struck Saturday night. The epicentre was 225 kilometres northwest of Bojnurd. It did not say how many houses were destroyed. In February, two earthquakes, measuring 6.1 and 5.1, rocked the northwestern province of Ardabil, killing 3,000 people and destroying more than 11,000 villages.

AMMAN BACCALAUREATE SCHOOL

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CHARLIE BROWN



Place: Amman Baccalaureate School Theater

Date: 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, of April, 1997

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Doors close at 7:00, Sharp

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Syrians call for change in law to attract private investment

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian businessmen are pressuring for a relaxation of government control over the economy after the country's so-called Law 10 failed in its aim to attract local and foreign private investment.

The law was adopted in May 1991 encouraging private investment in industrial ventures in Syria, where the government had previously kept an iron grip on the economy.

But Law 10 "has been emptied of all substance by the introduction of 180 restrictive regulations," Syrian deputy Hashem Anwar Al Akkad complained in parliament this week.

And the law is also contradicted by pre-1991 rules and regulations which it failed to overturn, including strict government control over foreign exchange.

German businessmen described the difficulties of investing in Syria during a recent conference with Syrian businessmen in the capital Damascus.

"How can a foreign investor be persuaded of the benefits of working in Syria when he sees local businessmen baulk at investing?" one German participant said, quoted by the

Syrian press.

Even when deals are agreed, Syria's complex foreign exchange rules and other restrictions mean many are dead in the water, the members of parliament said.

"Many Arab investors have explained to the government's Investment Bureau that they cannot carry out agreed projects in which they pledged \$1.35 billion," said Mr. Akkad, who is also a businessman.

Al Baath newspaper, the mouthpiece of Syria's ruling Baath Party, wrote that "more and more investors are failing to implement projects," while Syrian deputy Riad Seif said only 10 per cent of projects agreed under Law 10 had seen the light of day.

"A good number of projects which have been carried out have not made profits in the first two years of operation, others have made losses because of a slump in local demand and the lack of competitiveness of their products on foreign markets," Mr. Seif told parliament.

He added that such projects had created 3,952 jobs a year in the agricultural and industrial sectors up to 1996, while the number of job-seekers had risen by

150,716 a year.

Moreover, private sector exports fell by seven per cent between 1993 and 1995 while imports rose 15 per cent in the same period, Mr. Seif said.

As well as bureaucratic red tape, foreign entrepreneurs are put off by the expense of investing in Syria, economic experts said.

Riad Al Abrash, professor in economics at Damascus University, warned of the "high cost of foreign investment in Syria compared to other Arab countries."

He said foreign entrepreneurs paid a far steeper price for space in a free trade zone in Syria than they would in Egypt, where a square metre costs \$3.5, or even the Gulf where a square metre costs on average \$30.

According to the official Tishrin newspaper, the Syrian government is aware of the shortcomings of Law 10 and is proposing amendments to improve it.

These include the creation of new industrial zones, the introduction of tax breaks for investors, a simplification of export rules, the adoption of a single exchange rate and greater flexibility in the transfer of capital.

WTO states to push for financial services pact

GENEVA (R) — Major trading nations launch a new bid this week to agree on a global pact opening up the megabillion-dollar financial services industry to international competition under agreed rules.

And trade diplomats say the United States, which pulled back from a deal two years ago leaving the European Union to take the lead in shaping a temporary accord in the World Trade Organization (WTO), seems more ready to sign up this time.

"But if there is measured optimism, there is still no euphoria," said one key WTO envoy. "We've a long way to go, and I think we're going to need to see better offers from some emerging economies."

The new talks — the third effort in the past five years to get a deal — face a year-end deadline for completion and little real movement is expected until the autumn.

Over the coming week, a U.S. team headed by assistant trade representative Wendy Cutler will hold bilateral discussions with other WTO countries, and top negotiators from most states likely to join a deal will meet together on Thursday.

Financial services cover banking, securities business, insurance, asset management and linked activities — areas the WTO says account for \$1.2 trillion a day in foreign exchange transactions around the globe.

A pact built on the 1995 interim deal involving 43 countries — including all 15 EU member states — would commit signatories to a phased removal of restrictions on foreign companies operating in their domestic markets.

It would be underpinned by being subject to the WTO's open trading rule-book, allowing member countries to bring complaints over perceived violations to the watchdog's dispute settlement body, which has powers to see its rulings are observed.

Optimism has been boosted by the successful completion in February of a global pact to liberalise telecommunications markets — another service sector left over from the 1986-93 Uruguay Round of world trade negotiations.

WTO officials say an accord would bring quick

benefit to the ordinary customer of banks, insurance companies and broking houses by giving him more service providers to choose from and — because of competition — a better deal.

The United States, home to the world's largest national industry in the sector, declined to join the earlier accord — which runs out at the end of this year — because key developing countries were not ready to open up fast enough.

It said their offers were insufficient to justify throwing the U.S. market open wide to all comers, as it would have to under

the WTO's most-favoured-nation (MFN) rule which means all partners in the body have to be treated without discrimination.

But there were signs the U.S. decision was taken at least partly for political reasons in the run-up to last November's presidential elections, with the administration fearing it could lose votes if it appeared "soft" on foreign trade issues.

Parts of the U.S. industry had urged President Bill Clinton, then struggling in the polls, to refuse a deal on the terms available at the time. But now there is growing

pressure from the U.S. service sector for a switch.

In February, a coalition of U.S. and European bankers used the annual World Economic Forum in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos to launch an appeal for Washington to come on board this time round.

The new Clinton administration says it wants a deal, but has insisted it needs to see "substantially" full access to major financial markets — in Asia, and in Latin America which stayed largely aloof from the 1995 interim accord.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, APRIL 7, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your judgement is apt to be a little off-centred at this time, so use special care in handling financial matters or when speaking with friends. Later this evening you can get together with close friends for recreational activities.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Use much care in handling your financial reports or statements today, as well as when studying those of your friends or fellow associates. Later you can meet with acknowledgeable persons and seek their advice on business activities.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Give plenty of thought to an important monetary policy today or you could lose a bundle. Avoid contact with a self-appointed expert who thinks he or she has all the answers with financial and business matters.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be sure to steer clear today of a greedy, domineering individual. Use your imagination and find a way to improve your income. Later this evening you can go out on the town with your mate to a romantic location.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You should not allow a private anxiety to make you act unwisely today, think before you make a move. Be sure to avoid an altercation with your mate this morning. Later this evening will be good for just resting at home.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) Avoid overly sensitive persons today who could misunderstand you and offence at nothing. Be more romantic with your mate later this evening by going to special spot and he or she will return your affection.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 22) Taking any risks with one who has power over your affairs would not be wise this morning. Don't neglect any important business later this evening or you won't get noticed by a bigwig and become successful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Avoid an acquaintance today who is a schemer and could get you into a great deal of difficulty. Also, steer clear of any irate fellow associate later this evening who is only thinking out for himself or herself.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You should not get upset today over a bill until you have checked it carefully, or you may be in error. Be wonderfully happy with your mate later this evening and plan some special meal or activity which shows your affection.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A tense situation which arises tonight should be ignored. Be sure to keep any important promises you have made today and thereby your reputation will remain intact, which will gain you the respect of a bigwig.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Your career activities amount may seem too difficult to handle today, however, be patient and muddle through. Don't get upset over constructive criticism which could be helpful. Later this evening will be good for just relaxing.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You should not get into a new amusement today if it will take more time than you really have to spare. This is not a good time to take any financial risks, which will not be appreciated by fellow associates or your loved ones.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Pakistan foreign reserves rise to \$800m

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have increased to \$800 million, up from \$607 million last month, Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz has said.

The increase comes from \$200 million so far collected through donations and term deposits by citizens toward a debt repayment fund launched by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in February, he told reporters.

Mr. Aziz said contributions toward the fund were continuing and the pace of home remittances by overseas Pakistanis had also increased.

The public response has helped ease pressure from annual repayments on capital and interest on loans to

international creditors including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, officials said.

Pakistan, with external debts estimated at around \$30 billion, has been plagued by budget deficits.

The government of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was sacked in November, failed to achieve its commitment to the IMF to reduce the deficit to four per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

The last fiscal year to July 1996 ended with a budget deficit of more than six per cent to GDP.

The new government is to present its budget to the parliament in June for the

fiscal 1997-98.

Mr. Sharif has launched an austerity drive and announced an ambitious tax reforms including concessions on income tax to individuals and corporations and procedural changes for tax collection to boost revenues.

The government has also laid out a package of incentives for farmers, including enhanced procurement prices for their produce, better lending facilities and cuts in electricity rates for irrigation tubewells.

Mr. Aziz said the policies would lead to improvement in the overall economic situation of the country.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Huffy swallows

6 Bring down

10 US president

14 "... of many colors"

15 QED word

16 Ship — I

17 Incline

18 Certain book

20 Grocery container

22 "... Vennet"

(Holmes novel)

23 Depend

24 Join

26 Shocked

29 Archibald of basketball

30 Social gathering

33 Sci-fi movie

34 Helped

35 "Norma —"

36 "... is what I —"

(Rogers)

40 Always, poetically

41 Compact

42 Against

43 Finale

44 Unwritten

45 Kidnapper

47 Desert

48 Kind of chest

49 Z's kin

52 Carton, perhaps

56 "It's only a —"

59 Have — to pick

60 Moran or Gray

61 Sound from the sty

62 Punctuation mark

63 Furnace pipe

64 Pub drinks

65 Electric starter

DOWN

1 Surprised

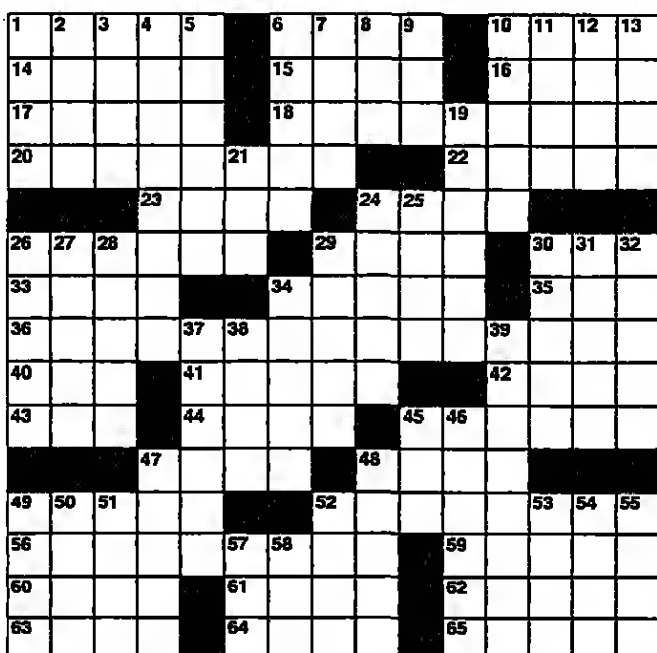
2 Western school letters

3 Chicago feature

4 — pencil (note needs)

5 Cubic meters

6 Compensate



by Melvin Kenworthy



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7 "... and a bone"
8 Kill
9 Summer: Fr.
10 Put aside
11 Exclamations
12 Centers of interest
13 Child
19 Yellowish green
21 Sandwich letters
24 Lost color
25 Texas col.
acronym
26 "... lovely as —"
27 Inexperienced
28 Accumulate
29 Nothing
30 River in Canada
31 Have an — the ground
32 The Norse gods
34 Book of maps
37 Weather line
38 Asta's mistress
39 Kid on a bike?
45 Officer
46 "... dare to eat —?" (Eliot)
47 Representative
48 Actor Tom
49 Newspaper feature, briefly
50 Word on a ship
51 Literary work
52 Corn bread
53 Forward
54 — about (circa)
55 Strange: pref.
57 Extinct bird
58 Lubricate

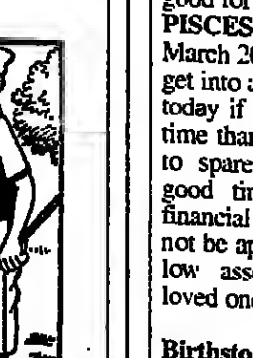
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Dutch win doubles, cut U.S. Davis Cup lead to 2-1

Australia whitewash Czechs

LONDON (AP) — Paul Haarhuis and Jacco Eltingh relied on booming serves to defeat Rick Leach and Jonathan Stark 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 Saturday and prevent the United States from sweeping its Davis Cup quarterfinal against the Netherlands.

The Americans take a 2-1 lead in the best-of-5 series into the reverse singles matches in Newport Beach, California. A victory by either Andre Agassi or Jim Courier would send the United States into the semi-finals in September.

Haarhuis and Eltingh, ranked among the world's top six teams, improved to 3-0 in Davis Cup doubles when the Netherlands trails 2-0.

"We try to put everything aside. We forget it's Davis Cup," Eltingh said. "We just have to think about our own level. If our own level is good enough, we can beat anyone in the world."

The gusting winds and unseasonably cold temperatures that affected Friday's matches disappeared Saturday. A slight breeze rippled the orange flags waved by the Dutch fans, who again wore painted faces and foam wooden shoes on their heads.

There were just four service breaks in the two-hour, 24-minute match, and three of them went to the Dutch. Leach and Stark got in 69 per cent of their first serves to the Dutch team's 59 per cent, but they were 1-of-8 on break chances.

"We had a lot of chances, but we couldn't capitalize on them because they came up with big serves," said Leach, who lives in nearby Laguna Beach and belongs to the Palisades Tennis Club where the matches are being played.

Ahead 2-1 in the second set, the Americans blew three break points on Haarhuis' serve. He held after three deuce points when Stark's service return sailed long.

Eltingh's backhand winner down the middle broke Stark in the ninth game and

ADelaide (R) — Australia completed a clinical 3-0 demolition of the Czech Republic in their Davis Cup quarter-final tie on Sunday when Mark Philippoussis and Pat Rafter won their reverse singles matches.

Australian number one Philippoussis overpowered Martin Damm 6-4 6-2 in the first of the reverse singles before Rafter beat David Rikl 7-6 0-6 6-2.

Philippoussis needed just 66 minutes to topple Damm on the memorial drive grass court while Rafter fought back after a sluggish start to overcome Rikl, a lowly-ranked player better known for his doubles play.

The tie was effectively over on Saturday when world number one doubles pair Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde beat Damm and Rikl 4-6, 6-1, 7-5, 6-4 to give the hosts an unbeatable 3-0 lead.

Australia now face a likely semifinal against the United States, who were leading 2-1 in their quarter-final against the Netherlands at Newport Beach in California.

Australia, winners of the international men's team event 26 times, had endured mixed Davis Cup fortunes

then Eltingh served out the set 6-4 with an ace.

The Americans again failed to convert two break points when leading 2-1 in the third. But Stark survived a break point down 15-40 on his serve. After he and Leach hit winners, the Dutch made two straight unforced errors to put the Americans ahead 3-2.

Leach's crosscourt forehand winner gave the United States its only break of the match on Haarhuis' serve in the sixth game. Leach and Stark wrapped up the set 6-3.

Both teams stayed on serve in the fourth set until the eighth game. With Leach serving, the



Pat Rafter

in recent years.

Relegated from the elite 16-team World Group after losing to Hungary in 1995, they fought their way back through regional qualifiers last year.

Their renaissance was confirmed when Australia upset holders France 4-1 in the opening round of this year's competition in February.

Americans had the advantage on the second deuce, but Haarhuis hit a forehand winner down the middle for break point.

Haarhuis took Leach's serve and smacked a backhand winner down the alley for a 5-3 lead. The Dutch needed three match points before Eltingh's ace won the match.

"Haarhuis came up with some really good shots. He did that the whole match," Stark said. "Maybe we should have played Jacco a little bit. We were out there trying our hardest. It was just a few points that they came up on the better side."

The Dutch must win both singles matches to win the

The Czech Republic's campaign was hit by the refusal of Petr Korda, Daniel Vacek, Bohdan Ulihrach and Slava Dosedel to play in the tie.

The team's fortunes dipped even further on Friday when Jiri Novak was forced to withdraw from his match against Philippoussis with a virus and was replaced by Rikl.

series.

They were in a similarly tight situation in February against Romania in the first round. They lost the opening singles matches, but Haarhuis and Eltingh got the comeback started by winning the doubles. They won the series 3-2.

"We have a little stiffer competition now," Haarhuis said. "If we're a little luckier tomorrow, we're going to be celebrating a big party tomorrow night."

In other World Group matches, Australia beat the Czech Republic 5-0, Italy led Spain 3-0, and Sweden took a 2-1 lead over South Africa.

United's loss is bad omen for European Cup

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United fell 3-2 at home to Derby in the Premiership on Saturday in a bad omen for their European Cup semi-final on Wednesday.

United still lead the Premiership by three points but Liverpool could grab top spot with a win at home to Coventry on Sunday.

Derby, motivated by relegation fears, have only won once away from home all season but form went out of the window.

United, who face Borussia Dortmund in their first leg match in Germany in midweek, went behind to a fluke shot by Ashley Ward in the 29th minute when a strange bounce from his shot saw the ball fly over the head of keeper Peter Schmeichel.

The Premiership had its first ever Costa Rican in the Premiership and Paulo Wanchope made it a day to remember as he capped his debut with a 35th minute goal.

And it was a superb shot from Wanchope who joined the side just in time for the transfer deadline.

But Cantona pulled one back for United just 18 seconds after the restart after being fed by Ole Solskjaer for 2-1.

With Gary Pallister and Schmeichel

in total confusion, Dean Sturridge found the net on his second attempt only for United to restore the one goal deficit at 3-2 seconds later through Solskjaer.

Southampton, like Derby fired up with the threat of the drop, won 3-1 at Nottingham Forest after three goals in the final minutes to lift themselves off the bottom of the Premiership.

The Saints went ahead after a 35-yard cracker from Jim Magilton.

He got the ball and out of the blue and hit a great long-range effort which bended round a non-plussed Forest keeper Mark Crossley.

Michael Evans hit Southampton's second goal in the 87th minute to severely dent Forest's hopes of staying up.

Stuart Pearce fired home an 88th minute penalty for Forest but Southampton made certain of the three points through a second goal from Evans a minute later.

Meanwhile Alan Shearer celebrated his return to the Newcastle side after a groin injury to hit a 77th minute equaliser at home to neighbours Sunderland to cancel out Michael Gray's 32nd minute opener.

Wimbledon, still hoping to reach Europe with a high finish in the

Premiership, were beaten 1-0 by Tottenham after Jason Dozzell hit a low shot home following Andy Sinton's inswinging corner from the left in the 81st minute at White Hart Lane.

Aston Villa beat Everton 3-1 following a dramatic fightback at Villa Park leaving the toffees harbouring slight relegation doubts.

Dave Watson was given a glier in his first game as caretaker manager of Everton as David Unsworth put the toffees in front.

Unsworth grabbed his fifth of the season with a scrambled 18th minute effort, but Villa hit back through their Yugoslav international Savo Milosevic four minutes from the break.

Then further goals for Villa by Steve Staunton and Dwight Yorke after the interval ensured the win for Villa.

Earlier in the day, Arsenal had their best victory at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge for 67 years in their London derby.

Arsene Wenger's side won through Ian Wright's 27th goal of the season, David Platt's first since November 13 and Dennis Bergkamp's fifth in seven games.

Dutch fans paint the town orange

NEWPORT BEACH (AFP) — Orange county California is, appropriately enough, proving the perfect home away from home for Dutch Davis Cup fans.

Clad in bright orange jump-suits, with big, bright orange mock wooden shoes bobbing on their heads, a group of 50 or so Dutch fans have put some 5,000 U.S. fans to shame with an assortment of keenly-timed chants, whistles, rattles and bells.

"I think they are fantastic out there," said Paul Haarhuis, whose doubles victory with Jacco Eltingh over Rick Leach and Jonathan Stark on Saturday kept the Netherlands' hopes alive in the best-of-five tie.

"It is really good for U.S. that we hear them cheer U.S. on, especially when you play outside your country. They are all having a good time, and they are all tennis players. They pretend to be students, but I don't know."

American fans at the posh Palisades club in Newport Beach, formerly called the John Wayne Club after the movie star who made his home and played tennis in this seaside town south of Los Angeles, seemed nonplussed by it all.

A few were downright hostile, making fun of the Dutch costumes, but most responded by gradually increasing their support of their own players.

That backfired a few times, since some U.S. fans seemed unaware of tennis protocol and had to be reminded not to cheer or whistle between the first and second serves of players from both teams.

Even so, Stark was happy to have their backing, and unperturbed by the fans from Holland.

"The Dutch fans are always kind of a loud group anyway," Stark said.

"I thought the crowd today was great. On the court, it didn't really seem like the Dutch overwhelmed the Americans at all."

"When Richey and I turned it around there in the third set,

there was a lot of noise and a lot of commotion."

A significant number of jack-in-the-box fans kept ushers busy by hopping out of their seats to head for the concession stands whenever they pleased — changeovers be damned.

Andre Agassi, who says playing for his country in Davis Cup is one of his greatest thrills, is resigned to the casual attitude among U.S. fans.

"I always like to see Americans get more into it, but I have played it long enough to know that they are excited about their day out at the tennis as opposed to beating the Netherlands."

"We tend to be a little spoiled with how many sports and how many sports heroes we have, so you don't see the same intensity as you do when you go overseas."

That's just fine with Jim Courier, who still sounds angry when he talks about the abuse he received from Brazilian fans in the first round this year.

"They were the toughest conditions I have ever faced," Courier said, citing the heat and humidity and altitude as well as the crowd.

"We are used to people treating us with respect, and the fans treat us absolutely no respect for us. It was one of the most satisfying victories of my career, and I hope I never have to go back to Brazil again. That is how much hate I have for what they did to us there."

"I don't think that what went on there was a part of sports."

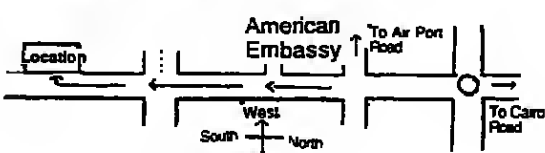
When you are back in the back of the court and they are telling you that you are not getting out of their country alive ... it is something I will always hold with me."

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CHENCHUZZ LA FEMME

East-West vulnerable, South

On this deal, most of the Open

competitors had great difficulty in stopping in game. Many got to five hearts, an uncomfortable contract but seemingly safe enough as the cards lay. However, not everyone made 11 tricks. A few encountered the sort of spectacular defense found by Sharon Seligman, West, of Israel in the match against Belgium.

West made the normal lead of the king of clubs, taken by the ace. Three rounds of spades were played, declarer discarding a club from dummy. West came a club ruff, then a trump from the table to declarer's ten.

Let's suppose that West won this trick with the queen and led another spade. Declarer would be forced to ruff with the jack of hearts. If declarer now guesses to enter the closed hand with a diamond and lead the king of hearts, all is well.

Seligman, however, won the first trump lead with the ace. When a spade was returned declarer, reasoning that the queen was with East, did not want to squander the jack. In effect, South took a finesse for the nine by ruffing with the eight. East overruled to complete the book, and West's trump queen was the setting trick.

Opening lead: King of ♠

Italy, France, The Netherlands and Sweden captured the first four places in the European Open Championship and thereby qualified to represent their home to the World Team Championship, to be held in China in October. In the women's event, France, Germany, Israel and Great Britain were the qualifiers.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Makelele to sign with Marseille

MARSEILLE (AFP) — Nantes' international midfielder Claude Makelele is reported to be on the point of signing for fellow first division club Marseille for 15 million francs (about three million dollars). Makelele, 23, is reportedly being offered higher wages at Marseille than those proposed by English Premiership club Arsenal. Makelele is under contract with Nantes till June 1999.

Rominger on track

BORDEAUX (AFP) — Swiss cyclist Tony Rominger, who has been having tests on the Bordeaux Velodrome in preparations to regain the four world record in November, has said his training is "going well." Rominger will wait till November to decide whether to attack the record of 56,379km set by England's Chris Boardman. On November 5 1994, Rominger broke the record with 55,291.

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Sally Field, Kiefer Sutherland and Ed Harris... in

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CINEMA TEL:634144 PHILADELPHIA "2"

Kevin Bacon, Robert Deniro, Dustin Hoffman, Jason Patric and Brad Pitt.... in

SLEEPERS

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

CINEMA TEL:699238 PLAZA

Mel Gibsonin

RANSOM

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420 CONCORD

CONCORD "1" MADONNA & ANTONIO BANDERAS...IN

EVITA

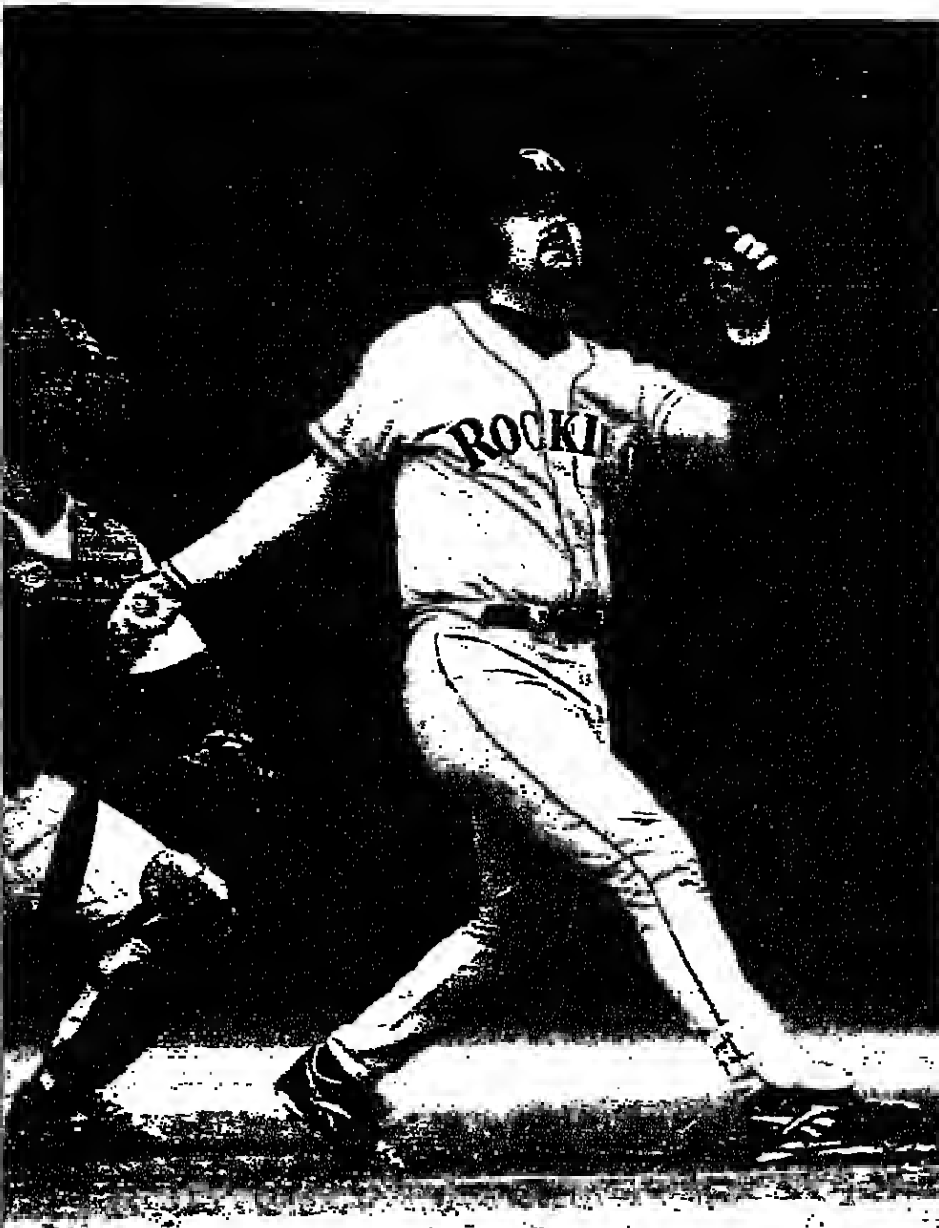
(new print)

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30

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Colorado Rockies' Larry Walker follows through on his third homerun of the day off Montreal Expos' pitcher Dave Veres during seventh inning action in Montreal. The Rockies went on to beat the Expos 15-3. Expos' catcher Darin Fletcher looks on (Reuters photo)

MAJOR LEAGUE RESULTS

American League

Milwaukee	5	Toronto	2
Detroit	15	Chicago White Sox	12
NY Yankees	10	Oakland	5
Minnesota	7	Kansas City	5
Baltimore	9	Texas	7
Cleveland	7	Anaheim	5
Boston	8	Seattle	6

National League

Colorado	15	Montreal	3
San Francisco	2	NY Mets	0
Florida	4	Cincinnati	3 (in 11)
Atlanta	8	Chicago Cubs	5
Houston	6	St Louis	5
San Diego	4	Philadelphia	1
Pittsburgh	3	Los Angeles	1

Hingis and Seles reach final

HILTON HEAD, South Carolina (AFP) — Switzerland's Martina Hingis stretched her unbeaten run this year to 30 matches on Saturday when she rallied to score a three-set victory over big-hitting Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands at the \$926,500 WTA event here.

The 16-year-old Swiss player now faces a Sunday title showdown with former World No. 1 Monica Seles who defeated Conchita Martínez of Spain 6-3, 6-4.

Hingis, who this week became the youngest number one in tennis history and who outlasted her Dutch opponent 5-7, 6-3, 6-2, admitted: "It was a hard match. She has a hard serve and it was hard to find a rhythm. She hits so hard the balls almost bounce over you."

"I'm not that tall. I thought I made pretty good returns. I just tried to block the ball and I hit them back for winners."

Hingis, who will be hoping to lift her sixth title of the year on Sunday by winning this first U.S. clay-court tune-up event for the French Open, has already won at Sydney, Tokyo, Paris and Key Biscayne as well as the Australian Open.

Seles, playing only her second tournament of the year after breaking a finger and preoccupied by her father's fight against cancer, notched up an impressive 6-3, 6-4 win over Martínez.

Seles has lost her last two outings against Hingis — the last defeat a humiliating 6-2, 6-1 loss in 44 minutes at last week's Lipton finals.

Seles is bidding for a 39th career singles title. Her last tournament win came last September in Tokyo.

4th Arab Junior Weightlifting Championship opens today

By Roufan Nahhas and JSYIF Press Committee

AMMAN — The 4th Arab Junior Weightlifting Championship opens today with nine countries taking part. Athletes from Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Tunisia, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Palestine in addition to Jordan will take part in the four-day event based in Jordan for the first time.

Jordan will participate with a number of experienced champions with high hopes of securing advanced positions. Mohammad Fakhr Ahmad is one of the favourites. The 19-year-old holds the bronze medal at the Junior Arab Championship in Egypt in 1994. He also took fifth place in the Arab Championship in Lebanon in 1996.

Teammate Mohammad Abdulkareem Taim took fourth place in the Arab Championship in Lebanon while Ali Jabri, Jordan's champion in the 59-kilogramme category, hopes to

clinch third place in the championship.

Osama Nabil, the Kingdom's champion for the year 1997, took third place in Baghdad Championship while Omar Asia, the Kingdom's champion in the 108-kilogramme category for two years was second in Baghdad.

Hisham Amareh has high hopes for second place as well as 19-year-old Wael Asmar and 16-year-old Mubashir Abdulraouf Aboudi. Only Ala' Muhammad has no record of participation abroad.

The Jordan Weightlifting Federation had sent invitations to 18 countries and only 9 countries sent confirmations before the end of March deadline.

Jordan clinched a gold medal in 1996 championship which took place in Lebanon by player Ayed Al Khawaldeh.

The Jordanian team went through extensive training under the supervision of Chinese coach Ding Ching and Jordanian coach Ahmad Dagheh.

Countdown begins for Asian Group 3 World Cup qualifiers

By Adnan Tobasi in Manama and Aileen Bannayan in Amman

JORDAN'S NATIONAL soccer team has high hopes of scoring good results and qualifying to the second round when their Asian World Cup qualifiers kick off in Manama, Bahrain April 8.

Team captain Jamal Abu Abed said a win against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the opening match Tuesday would give the team a valuable boost and might determine their chances in the qualifiers.

However, that might not be an easy task as the UAE is Asia's second ranked team and had previously reached the World Cup finals in 1990.

Jordan will be facing the UAE April 8 and hosts Bahrain April 14 in their first round/first leg Group 3 matches. The second leg of the qualifiers will be held in Sharjah, UAE starting April 19 and only the group winner will qualify to the second round.

Coach Mohammad Awad said he believed Group 3 teams are very close and that the Kingdom's team stood a good chance at the qualifiers although both opponents are experienced and have prepared well.

He said earlier results in friendly matches should not be the only measure of the forms and chances of the three teams.

Bahrain beat Nepal 9-0 in their latest match. Earlier, they beat Bangladesh 2-1 and lost 3-1 to Kuwait.

The UAE lost the latest of their two

friendly matches 2-0 to Syria and 4-1 to Norway. Their other results were a 1-1 draw with Syria and a 2-1 win over Lebanon.

The Kingdom's team continued their training in the searing 30 degree heat and 90 per cent humidity in Bahraini capital. However, they did not yet have the chance to train at the national stadium where the qualifiers will be held.

Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) Deputy Chairman Saleh Irshaidat and Secretary-General Hisham Asfour joined Jordan's 31-member delegation Sunday after representing the Kingdom in the meetings of the General Assembly of the Asian Soccer Confederation which concluded in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Also arriving in Manama Sunday were FIFA referees from Saudi Arabia, Syria, China, Yemen, Oman, Turkmenistan and Kuwait.

Assistant team coach Adnan Mas'oud said players were in high spirits hoping to qualify to the second round for the first time in the Kingdom's history.

This will be the fourth time Jordan plays in World Cup qualifying matches after taking part in first round qualifiers for Mexico 96, Italy 90, and U.S.A 94.

Jordan's record in eight friendly internationals included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins, both over Oman.

At the start of their training camps

abroad the Jordanian team had two matches against Lebanon losing 1-0 in Beirut and drawing 0-0 in Amman.

Against the Iraqi team Jordan twice lost 1-0 in Baghdad while both matches against Syria ended in goalless draws.

The Kingdom's only wins were 2-0 and 4-1 in Muscat on the third leg of the team's training camps abroad.

Thirty-six Asian countries will contest the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups. Some groups have already begun their qualifiers.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

The Kingdom's team includes Mu'taz Rishet, Youssef Ammani, Mohammad Mahadin, Amjad Taher, Hussein Shanaineh, Faisal Ibrahim, Subhi Suleiman, Jamal Abu Abed, Adnan Awad, Nari Yadij, Jiryes Tadros and Badran Shayan. The team also includes Ahmad Abu Nasouh, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Mohammad Khaz'ali, Abdullah Abu Zame'h, Isam Mahmoud, Munir Abu Hantush, Bassam Al Khatib, Ahmad Khalil, Ja'far Hammad, Hassounah Sheikh.

Unpredictable Knicks beat Hawks; Suns, Sonics win

ATLANTA (R) — John Starks had 26 points off the bench as the unpredictable New York Knicks turned back the Atlanta Hawks 102-97 Saturday in a battle for third place in the Eastern Conference.

Starks hit seven three-pointers and Larry Johnson's free throw with 1:17 to play snapped a tie for New York, which opened a two-game lead over the Hawks in the battle for third place in the Eastern Conference. Atlanta also fell one-half game behind fourth-place Detroit.

"It's a great win, obviously, against a great team, but it doesn't alleviate anything from last night," said Knicks coach Jeff Van Gundy, referring to Friday's loss at home to the injury-riddled Orlando Magic.

"The inconsistency is troubling. Hopefully, we can give the type of effort we gave tonight every night." Mookie Blaylock scored 32 points and Steve Smith added 26 for Atlanta, which lost for just the fifth time in 39 home games this season. The Hawks were beaten for only the second time in their last 10 games overall.

New York improved to 24-14 on the road and has won three straight away from home. The Knicks have won two of three meetings with Atlanta this season.

"It was a big win for us," said Chris Childs, who had 14 points and eight assists.

"They've been playing well. It's kind of disappointing how we can give this effort tonight and play like we did last night."

Christian Laettner and Dikembe Mutombo both fouled out after Atlanta held its final lead, 92-90 at the 2:50 mark.

"We didn't execute well down the stretch," said Blaylock. "Starks came in and really got them going."

"We got a few bad ones (calls), but the refs are part of the game, that's part of the ballgame. They played a good ballgame themselves. It's just a tough loss for us."

In Seattle, Gary Payton scored 23 points and dished out eight assists as the SuperSonics handed the Dallas Mavericks their 10th straight loss, 103-84.

Hersey Hawkins added 17 points and Delf Schrempf had 15 for Seattle, which had lost three of its last five games but still leads the second-place Los Angeles Lakers by 1 1/2

games in the Pacific Division.

"We're not worried about anything, you guys (media) act like we are 12-50, we're 52-23 and that's a pretty damn good record and we are leading our division," said Payton.

Sasha Danilovic netted 18 points and Shawn Bradley had 16 and 10 rebounds for Dallas, which has dropped seven in a row on the road.

Seattle star Shawn Kemp was held out of the starting lineup for the fourth consecutive game and finished with just three points and no rebounds in seven minutes.

In Charlotte, Matt Geiger tipped in a miss of a Vlade Divac shot at the buzzer, giving the Hornets a 115-113 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers.

Glen Rice scored 41 points, his sixth 40-point game of the season, to lead the Hornets, who have won three straight and clinched a playoff berth the previous night.

"I have never hit a game-winner until now," Geiger said.

"It feels great to do it."

Jerry Stackhouse had a career-high 39 points for Philadelphia, which was swept by the Hornets this season.

In Miami, Tim Hardaway scored 11 of his 20 points in the decisive third quarter as the Heat defeated the Toronto Raptors 98-84 for their eighth straight home win.

The game was tied at half-time, 46-46, but the Heat opened the third quarter with a 14-3 run.

Hardaway finished with 11 assists. Alonzo Mourning, who did not play in the final period, added 15 points and 10 rebounds, helping Miami to its 11th win in 12 games.

In Portland, Rex Chapman scored all of his 22 points in the second half as the Phoenix Suns posted their ninth straight win, 99-90 over the Trail

Blazers.

Kevin Johnson scored 12 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter, helping the suns to their seventh straight road win. Phoenix has won 12 of its last 13 overall. Kenny Anderson scored 22 points to lead the Trail Blazers, who split a four-game homestand. Portland had won the first three meetings with Phoenix this season.

At Golden State, Donyell Marshall tied a career high with 30 points as the Warriors rolled to their third straight victory, 120-103 over the San Antonio Spurs.

Chris Mullin added 22 points and Joe Smith had 19.

Dominique Wilkins scored 25 points and Vinny Del Negro added 20 for the spurs, who were swept by Golden State for the first time in club history.

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Correction
A Jordan Times advertisement published Thursday, April 3, 1997, about a deluxe furnished apartment for rent Tel. 674286 erroneously announced that the apartment will be available for rent on Oct 15. The flat is ready for immediate rent. For more information call Tel: 674286

JORDAN TIMES 699634, 684311

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A representative from Coventry University UK, Dr. Hafid Al-Daffaee, will be visiting the Kingdom for the duration

5-13 April 1997

During his visit he will be having meetings at the Universities of the Kingdom and will be giving talks on recent research within the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences at Coventry University. The talks include

*Sonochemistry

*Environmental Analysis

*Biotechnology and Environmental Stress

* Air Conditioning using Solar Energy

* Safety in the Science Laboratory

Dr. Al Daffaee will be meeting prospective students who wish to apply for undergraduate or postgraduate studies in the sciences, engineering and humanities at Coventry University. The meeting will be

On Thursday 10 April

from 13:00-19:00

in the Conference Room at the Marriott Hotel (Issam Aljuni Street, Shmeissani, Amman)

For further information and appointment for counselling please contact Dr. Al-Daffaee at the Marriott telephone 607607 Higher Education for All



COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

Iraq denies hindering U.N. arms inspection

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Sunday rejected charges by U.N. weapons inspectors that it had obstructed the work of the United Nations Special Commission on disarmament Iraq (UNSCOM).

A Foreign Ministry statement insisted Iraq was offering complete cooperation to UNSCOM, whose leader Rolf Ekeus wrapped up a visit to Baghdad on Saturday with a swipe at alleged Iraqi interference in UNSCOM's work.

"The Iraqi side presented Mr. Ekeus during his meetings in Baghdad with a detailed report giving replies to UNSCOM's questions on a range of issues raised by this body," said the Foreign Ministry statement.

Mr. Ekeus said before leaving for Manama, Bahrain, that UNSCOM had "seen a serious deterioration" in Iraq's support for U.N. monitoring work which seeks to ensure Baghdad does not resume banned weapons programmes.

"They have seen a tendency to block, undercut, make our helicopter operations dangerous," he told a press conference after three days of talks with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and other Iraqi officials.

The former Swedish diplomat warned of a "serious setback" if interference continued.

but said he had received a "very understanding response from the Iraqi side" about the monitoring complaints and said discussions took place in a "cordial" and "very constructive" atmosphere.

Mr. Ekeus also said he had failed to find out any new information about Iraq's chemical and germ warfare potential.

The Iraqi statement, quoted by the press here, said the two sides discussed the biological weapons dossier, and that they had agreed "a common plan of action likely to accelerate the closing of the dossier."

The statement added that the two sides had agreed to resolve "practical problems" relating to monitoring of disarmament within the framework of an agreement between the parties signed last June.

Under the terms of the agreement, Iraq pledged to cooperate with UNSCOM and Mr. Ekeus insisted on visiting Baghdad every two months to check on the progress of the disarmament operation.

Under U.N. resolutions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Iraq must satisfy UNSCOM it has scrapped its programmes for weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles as well as complied with long-term monitoring before economic sanctions can be lifted.

Hamas: U.S. seeks prolonged detention for Abu Marzouk

AMMAN (AP) — The United States will keep Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzouk in detention, even though Israel has decided to drop its request for extradition, a Hamas spokesman said Sunday.

U.S. officials are reluctant to release him in case Israel renews its request once tension with Palestinians subsides, said Ibrahim Ghosheh, a spokesman for the group in Amman.

"We have information that the United States will keep Mr. Abu Marzouk in detention for a prolonged period," he said.

Mr. Ghosheh declined to reveal the source of his information. But Mr. Abu Marzouk's lawyer said Friday that his client could remain jailed for years trying to prove he is not a terrorist.

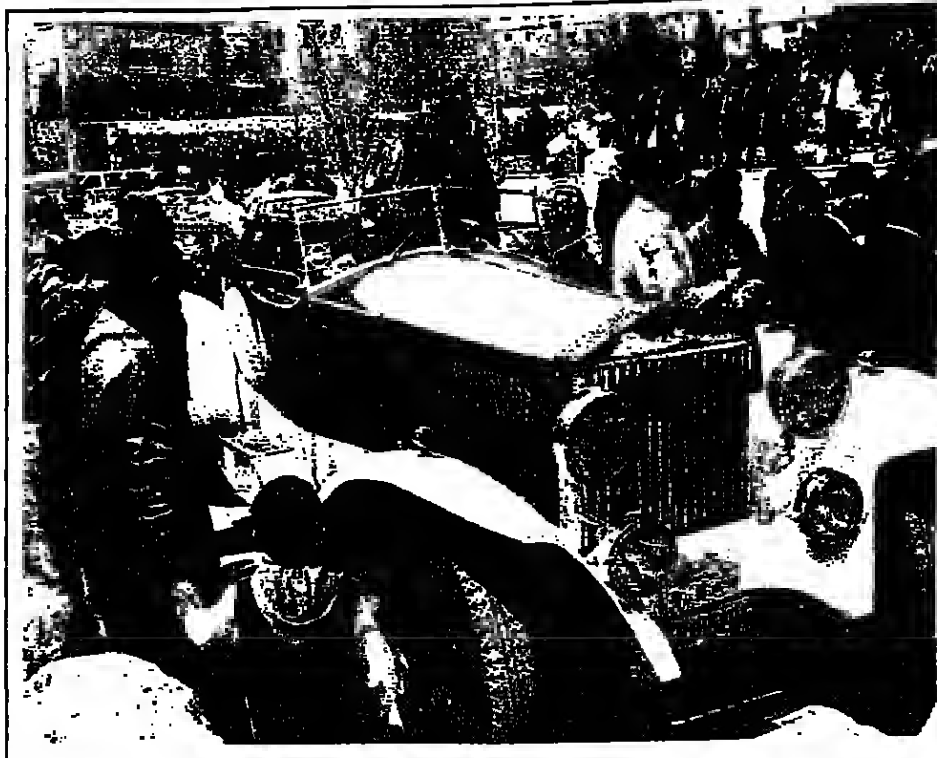
Mr. Abu Marzouk, 46, a former head of Hamas' political bureau, has been in detention in New York since he was arrested in July 1995 on charges of violating U.S. immigration laws.

A federal court judge ruled in May that there was cause to believe that Mr. Abu Marzouk was involved in 10 anti-Israeli attacks from 1990 to 1994 that killed 47 people.

But last week, Israel dropped its request for extradition, fearing a backlash from Palestinians amid heightened tension.

Mr. Abu Marzouk repeatedly has said he is innocent of the charges and that he has no involvement with Hamas' militant wing, which has claimed responsibility for deadly bombings in Israel.

There have been reports that talks are under way among Jordan, Israel and the United States to extradite Mr. Abu Marzouk to Jordan.



VINTAGE CARS IN AMMAN: Jordanians crowd around a 1928 Rolls Royce Phantom in downtown Amman on Sunday. Around 25 classic cars arrived in Israel from Germany on Sunday on a tour of the region in support of the Middle East process (Reuters photo)

Saudi official denies Syria refused to help capture bomb mastermind

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi official denied Sunday a U.S. news report that Syria refused to help Saudi Arabia capture a dissident identified as the mastermind behind a bombing in Saudi Arabia.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the information in the Washington Post story was "erroneous."

The newspaper reported Saturday that months before a blast killed 19 U.S. airmen in Dhahran in June, Saudi Arabia was searching for Saudi dissident Ahmad Ibrahim Mughassil as part of an investigation into an earlier anti-U.S. attack in Riyadh.

But Syria refused to help capture Mughassil for fear of upsetting the militant group, the newspaper said.

Mughassil planned the Dhahran attack, the paper added.

An Arab diplomat in Riyadh said the Post information may have come from "leaks" occurring in response to recent Syrian statements strongly criticising the United States for partiality towards Israel.

The Saudi authorities have not yet provided any indication of who was involved in the attack in Dhahran, for which previously unknown organisations claimed responsibility, saying U.S. soldiers must leave Saudi Arabia.

The paper said Mughassil, who remains at large, has been identified by Canadian security officials as "the mastermind" behind the June 25 truck bomb explosion at the U.S. military residence Khobar Towers in Dhahran.

The Canadian security officials listed Mughassil in court papers filed in the case of another Dhahran suspect, Hani Abdul Rahim Al Sayegh, who was said to be the driver of a vehicle which accompanied the truck containing the explosives.

Sayegh was arrested in Canada last August and is currently facing a deportation hearing. The Arab sources believe Mughassil is now in Iran, the paper said.

The Los Angeles Times reported Friday that Canada's arrest of Sayegh may have hurt the U.S. probe into the bombing.

It said American officials were frustrated at the decision by Canadian authorities to arrest Sayegh, foiling U.S. investigators' efforts to use him as a major independent lead in probing the Khobar Towers bombing.

The decision also thwarted U.S. hopes that Sayegh would provide a richer trove of intelligence regarding individuals, groups and countries that might have played a role in the attack in Dhahran, the Times quoted unnamed officials as saying.

Because of the Canadian action, the United States has not taken any legal steps against Sayegh, and none is in the works, according to law enforcement sources cited in the Times.

"Hard evidence is needed for probable cause and it's not there," the paper quoted one official as saying.

"We don't think he's a dry hole, but we don't have enough information on him and now we're not likely to get it," the official added.

Canadian authorities say Sayegh engaged in surveillance of the Khobar Towers and drove one of two cars that accompanied the explosives-laden truck.

But the Times quoted the source as saying U.S. officials were concerned about the validity of the claim, given that much of it came from "uncollaborated information" from Saudi Arabia, based either on interrogation of dissidents detained indefinitely or on "incentives."



Mother gets custody of 'Home Alone' star

NEW YORK (AFP) — A New York city judge has given custody of "Home Alone" star Macaulay Culkin and five of his six siblings to the actor's mother, Patricia Bentrup. The decision ended a long and acrimonious custody dispute between Bentrup and her former husband, Christopher "Kit" Culkin, who live in separate apartments in the same Manhattan building. The judge, however, strongly suggested that the father be involved in his children's show-biz careers. "I believe he has had much to do with Macaulay's success," the ruling says.

Flatley loses weight

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Michael Flatley, the star and creator of the hit Irish step-dance show "Lord of the Dance," says he loses 3.6 to 4.5 kilograms every show, according to People Magazine. Flatley, 45, is 1.83 meters and 66 kilograms, dances in seven performances a week, severely punishing his feet. "They're always sore," he tells the magazine. "I soak them in ice every night." Flatley also spends time in a flotation tank, where "nobody can fax me," and says he "eats everything in sight" to keep his weight up. Lord Of The Dance, currently touring the United States, has grossed \$60 million with CD and video sales adding another \$100 million.

Prince's briefs' tags nicked

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Britain's Prince William, who's now on safari in Africa with his brother Harry and father Prince Charles, has been having a tough go of it at school. People magazine reports. The magazine says that someone at William's school has been ripping the name tag off his briefs. School authorities believe that the name tags are prized souvenirs since he is in line to be the future king of Britain.

Comedian won't travel again with 'grass'

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Counter-culture comedian Tommy Chong got caught with marijuana by Canadian customs officers while on his way to Los Angeles from Vancouver, where he's shooting the movie "Best Buds." Chong wasn't charged, but his name went onto a computer list of those to be searched every time they cross the border. He says he doesn't plan to travel with marijuana again. "Besides," he added, "there will be plenty of it up here."

Arsenio is over

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Once again, Arsenio Hall is out of a job. The former prince of late-night talk shows has had his new sitcom on the ABC television network pulled because of disappointing reviews and poor ratings. "Arsenio" was scheduled to end its run April 23, but now ABC says the last show airs Wednesday. Producers thought the sitcom — one of ABC's bright hopes, with 13 episodes purchased sight unseen for \$900,000 — was not very funny. "He seemed out of his element," said Betsy Frank, Zenith Media TV analyst. "It wasn't the way we remembered him." Hall says ABC entertainment President Jamie Tarses "actually makes a lot of sense with what she's doing. You don't want to try to repair a plane in flight. You really need to land first." Producers hope to retool the show and bring it back next season.

More than 80 Algerians massacred by militants

ALGIERS (AFP) — More than 80 civilians have been murdered by suspected guerrillas, including some who were beheaded with a chainsaw, in the worst such massacres in six months, newspapers said Sunday.

Most of the victims had their throats slit in the attacks while others, including children and women were decapitated with a chainsaw, according to witnesses cited by the papers.

It was impossible to independently confirm the reports and the government has remained silent on the subject.

The guerrilla attacks were carried out in a number of areas around the country on Thursday and Friday, the papers said.

Fifty-two of the victims, including women, children and the elderly, were killed Thursday in the hamlet of Thalit, located 80 kilometres south of Algiers.

The papers said the village was overtaken by a gang of 30 to 40 men who ordered residents out of their homes and proceeded to kill them.

Several other victims were killed the same night in the villages of Harbil, Sidi Naamane, and in the region of Bouira, southeast of Algiers.

Witnesses told the Liberté newspaper that on Friday the village of Amroussa was raided by another unit led by Antar Zouabri, leader of the Islamic Armed Group, and between 15 and 17 people were killed.

Among them were three children under the age of three and seven women who had their throats slit and were then decapitated with a chainsaw. The victims' homes were then torched, the witnesses said.

The attackers managed to avoid local defence forces by splitting into two groups, one of which simulated an attack to attract the security forces' attention while the other carried out the killings.

The daily Al Watan said that the same night, another group attacked a farm in Mirdja, near the seaside resort of Sidi Ferruch, west of Algiers, and killed four people. The farm was located some 200 metres from a police station, the paper said.

The killings came after a series of sweeps by government forces aimed at reducing militant activity ahead of June 5 general elections.

President Liamine Zeroual had promised the "extermination" of the militants after the holy month of Ramadan in January and February left

around 400 people murdered.

Newspapers had reported that more than a hundred extremists had been killed in police and army operations, including several leaders of Islamic groups.

One of Algeria's main militant groups, the Islamic Front for Armed Jihad, recently named its new leader after the previous one was killed in a clash with security forces.

Exiled leaders of Algeria's banned Islamic Salvation Front in Brussels, who called Wednesday for a boycott of the elections, accused government infiltrators and the Islamic Front of the attacks.

The government says the extremists have been so weakened they can only resort to attacking relatively defenceless villagers, but the opposition claims guerrilla attacks have, in fact, become progressively more serious.

Militants began an armed insurgency against the military-backed authorities after the cancellation of January 1992 general elections, which the Islamic Salvation Front had been poised to win.

An estimated 50,000 people, mainly civilians, have died in the brutal civil war which has since wracked the country.

Malaysian student group urges release of anti-Israel protestors

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian student group on Sunday called on authorities not to prosecute Muslim students who clashed with police last week in a demonstration against the presence of the Israeli cricket team.

The education minister, meanwhile, was quoted as saying the students, who joined hundreds of Malaysians in Friday's protests, could face suspension or expulsion.

"We feel the demonstration must be seen as a political expression by Malaysians to oppose the presence of the Israeli cricket team," said Ahmad Azum Abdul Rahman, secretary-general of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM).

Mr. Rahman said in a statement, the police action against the peaceful demonstration was regrettable and should "not be seen as an attempt to challenge the police or (break) the law."

"ABIM appeals to the government to release all those arrested immediately and freed from any legal charges," he added.

Police on Friday used water cannon and batons to disperse the demonstration at the Suburban University of Malaysia, where Israel was due to play Argentina in an International Cricket Council (ICC) trophy match.

Protestors said that allowing Israel to send a sporting team here could preface diplomatic recognition of the Jewish state.

Muslim-majority Malaysia has no diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv but they have limited trade relations.

The game was moved to another venue but about 100 demonstrators, led by the hardline opposition Parti Islam (PAS), took refuge in a nearby mosque, where they were rounded up by police after a six-hour siege.

The 245 people who were arrested under section 27 of the police act for taking part

in the illegal assembly, were released on police bail Saturday.

But four PAS leaders including its youth secretary Mahfuz Omar and information chief Salahuddin Ayoub were ordered to be remanded by a magistrate's court for five days.

"We urge the relevant authorities to free those detained during Friday's demonstration at the University of Malaysia," the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students said in a statement.

The PAS central committee said it was shocked and dismayed by the police action to break up the peaceful demonstration.

"We demand all those in police custody to be released immediately," PAS youth chief Abu Bakar Chik said.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Najib Tun Razak was quoted by the Sunday Star as saying the students could either be suspended or even expelled.

"They jeopardised their own future. If they are suspended or expelled from the university, it is their own doing," he said. He added that the university's disciplinary committee would meet soon and those involved should be prepared to accept their punishment.

Mr. Najib, who described the demonstration as "uncalled for," said that as students they should portray to the world that Malaysian Muslims were progressive and tolerant.

"As future leaders they should also take a more realistic approach on matters such as this and avoid being manipulated by political parties like Parti Islam or other groups," he said.

Prime Minister Mohammad Mahathir who is currently on a three-day visit to Kuwait had described the protest as "a stupid thing to do."

Thousands of W. Bank teachers strike

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — In the first major strike against the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), thousands of teachers in the West Bank stayed home from school on Sunday, demanding salary increases.

The general strike shut down schools in Nablus, Jenin, Hebron, Bethlehem and Ramallah, keeping hundreds of thousands of students out of class. Schools in the Gaza Strip are administered separately and teachers there did not strike.

The open-ended strike was called by the West Bank Teachers Coordination High Committee, which is demanding salary increases of between 85 and 100 per cent.

The current average salary for Palestinian teachers is about \$400 a month.

The general strike follows a year of protests by the teachers — including partial strikes and marches in the major West Bank cities.

Last month, a ministerial committee appointed by President Yasser Arafat to discuss the teachers' demands offered a 10 per

cent raise.

On Saturday, Education Minister Yasser Amr fired 19 teachers who organised the protests. He said Sunday that he had rescinded the decision.

Groups of students protested outside the Ministry of Education offices in Hebron on Sunday, demanding Mr. Amr's resignation. Mr. Amr told the Voice of Palestine Radio station that Mr. Arafat and the minister of finance had told him there was no money for teachers.

But Taha Nasser, a teacher in Hebron and one of the leaders of the strike, accused the PNA of mishandling its finances.

There is a yearly budget \$150 million for education, while the ministry is only spending \$110 million. "Where is the \$40 million?" Mr. Nasser asked.

Mr. Amr said countries that have pledged money to the PNA have not given all the money they promised, and accused teachers of challenging Mr. Arafat's government at the time of severe political crisis.

Most involved partially responsible for Baqoura tragedy — Israeli panel

Serious problems found with directives on school trips; students were not supposed to be on the Jordanian side, commission finds

The Jerusalem Post

THE PRESSLER Commission report on the March 13 Naharayim (Baqoura) shootings, in which seven Beit Shemesh schoolgirls were killed by a Jordanian soldier, finds most of those involved in the school trip at least partially responsible for the tragedy, according to Channel 1 report on the commission's findings, which have not been released.

However, Yohanan Ben Ya'acov, the coordinator of the commission, said last night that the commission was currently formulating its recommendations and had not completed its work. He refused to comment on what he termed "rumours."

According to Channel 1, the commission found serious problems with the Education Ministry's directives regarding trips to the site, and said the prohibition on visiting the Jordanian side of the site was not properly enforced.

According to the television report, which cited a "senior source" on the commission, the investigators were also "shocked" to discover that the material distributed by the ministry regarding the site did not differentiate between the areas under Israeli and Jordanian sovereignty.

Dozens of school principals testified that thousands of pupils had visited the Jordanian side of the site, Channel 1 reported.

Moshav Shadmot Mehola guides who took the AMIT Fuert School youngsters to the Jordanian side of the site were irresponsible, and did not check whether the ministry permitted such trips to include visits to the Jordanian side, the commission reportedly found.

The commission also found that the school had not told parents exactly what the trip's itinerary included, Channel 1 reported.

While the schoolgirls had said after the incident that it took Israeli security forces a long time to get to them, this was not borne out by the investigation, which found the opposite was the case. Investigators attributed the girls' remarks to trauma, but said they did not investigate the matter further as this was not part of their mandate.

The commission reportedly recommended banning school trips to the Jordanian side of the site unless Jordan permits different security arrangements there.

Education Ministry officials had maintained that there were clear instructions from the ministry saying the site was off-limit to school trips, but there were subsequent reports that dozens of schools had visited there.

A police representative told the Kneit Education Committee that police at the site had never been told to prevent such school groups from crossing over into the Jordanian section of the site.

Fuert School officials maintained they had all the necessary permits to visit the site.